ROUTLEDGE

DIVINATION and THEURGY in NEOPLATONISM

Oracles of the Gods

CRYSTAL ADDEY

DIVINATION AND THEURGY IN NEOPLATONISM

Crystal Addey has given us a book to be welcomed warmly, reminding us of what an essential role 'practical' relations with the gods maintains in later Neoplatonism. Like it or not, Platonism is a religion as well as a philosophy, and Dr Addey masterfully explores the implications of that, while relating the religion to the philosophy.

John Dillon, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

Why did ancient philosophers consult oracles, write about them, and consider them to be an important part of philosophical thought and practice? This book explores the extensive links between oracles and philosophy in Late Antiquity, particularly focusing on the roles of oracles and other forms of divination in third and fourth century A.D. Neoplatonism. Examining some of the most significant debates between pagan philosophers and Christian intellectuals on the nature of oracles as a central yet contested element of religious tradition, Addey focuses particularly on Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* and Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* – two works which deal extensively with oracles and other forms of divination.

This book argues for the significance of divination within Neoplatonism and offers a substantial reassessment of oracles and philosophical works and their relationship to one another. With a broad interdisciplinary approach, encompassing Classics, Ancient Philosophy, Theology, Religious Studies and Ancient History, Addey draws on recent anthropological and religious studies research which has challenged and re-evaluated the relationship between rationality and ritual.

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Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism

Oracles of the Gods

CRYSTAL ADDEY
University of St Andrews, UK

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For my parents, Tim and Averil Addey

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List of Abbreviations

Aristotle	
Met.	*Metaphysics*
Chald. Or.	*Chaldean Oracles*
Cicero	
Div.	*De divinatione* (*On Divination*)
Eunapius	
VS	*Vitae Sophistarum* (*Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists*)
Eusebius	
DE	*Demonstratio Evangelica*
HE	*Historia Ecclesiastica*
PE	*Praeparatio Evangelica*
Iamblichus	
De An.	*De Anima* (*On the Soul*)
DM	*De Mysteriis* (*On the Mysteries*)
In Parm.	*In Parmenidem Commentarius*
In Phaed.	*In Phaedonem Commentarius*
In Phaedr.	*In Phaedrum Commentarius*
In Tim.	*In Timaeum Commentarius*
VP	*De Vita Pythagorica* (*On the Pythagorean Way of Life*)
Macrobius	
In Somn.	*Commentarius ex Cicerone in Somnium Scipionis*
Marinus	
Proc.	*Life of Proclus*
PGM	*Papyri Graecae Magicae*
Plato	
Ap.	*Apology*

Cra.	*Cratylus*
Cri.	*Crito*
Euthyd.	*Euthydemus*
Leg.	*Leges* (*Laws*)
Phd.	*Phaedo*
Phdr.	*Phaedrus*
Prt.	*Protagoras*
Resp.	*Respublica*
Symp.	*Symposium*
Ti.	*Timaeus*

Plotinus

Enn.	*Enneads*

Plutarch

An seni	*An seni respublica gerenda sit*
De def. or.	*De defectu oraculorum* (*The Decline of Oracles*)
De Is.	*De Iside et Osiride* (*On Isis and Osiris*)
De Pyth. or.	*De Pythiae oraculis* (*The Oracles at Delphi*)

Porphyry

Abst.	*De abstinentia*
De antr. nymph.	*De antro nympharum* (*On the Cave of the Nymphs*)
De Stat.	*On Statues* (*De Statuis*)
Marc.	*Letter to Marcella*
Phil. Orac.	*Philosophy from Oracles*
Plot.	*Life of Plotinus* (*Vita Plotini*)
VP	*Vita Pythagorea* (*Life of Pythagoras*)

Proclus

ET	*Elements of Theology*
In Alc.	*In Alcibiadem Commentarius*
In Crat.	*In Cratylum Commentarius*
In. Parm,	*In Parmenidem Commentarius*
In Remp.	*In Rempublicam Commentarius*
In Tim.	*In Timaeum Commentarius*
Plat. Theol.	*Platonic Theology*

Sallustius

De Diis.	*De Diis et Mundo* (*Concerning the Gods and the Universe*)

Journal and Book Series Abbreviations

AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
AJPh	*American Journal of Philology*
AncW	*Ancient World*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
CB	*Classical Bulletin*
CCSL	*Corpus Christianorum series Latina*
CPh	*Classical Philology*
CQ	*Classical Quarterly*
GRBS	*Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*
HR	*History of Religions*
HThR	*Harvard Theological Review*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JÖAI	*Jahreshefte des österreichischen archäologischen Instituts in Wien*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
REAug	*Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes*
REG	*Revue des études greques*
RHR	*Revue de l'histoire des Religions*
SO	*Symbolae Osloenses*
TAPhA	*Transactions of the American Philological Association*
ZPE	*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*

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Chapter 1
Oracles and Philosophy

Oracles and philosophy were deeply connected in Antiquity, from at least the Second Sophistic until the end of Late Antiquity. 'Philosophy in oracles' has been identified as a defining feature of oracular activity in the second and third centuries A.D.: many oracles are attested, both in literary and epigraphic sources, which have a philosophical and theological tone and content.[1] 'Oracles in philosophy' is also one of the defining features of philosophical activity during this period and subsequently: many philosophers discuss and debate the operation of oracles, the content of specific oracular utterances and, in a broader sense, the role of various types of divination within philosophy. Many philosophers also consulted oracles and some even claimed to be prophets (or prophetesses) who had the ability to utter oracles themselves. Oracles were seen as an important source of truth in Late Antique religion and philosophy, particularly within Neoplatonism.[2] Two stories may help to illustrate how oracles and philosophy were inextricably connected in Late Antique intellectual, cultural and religious traditions.

The first story concerns a visit to the Oracle of Trophonios, in Lebadea, Boeotia. Apollonios of Tyana enters a dark, snake-filled tunnel and descends underground to consult the Oracle.[3] He announces that he will ask Trophonios which is the best type of philosophy. The priests are reluctant to let him consult the hero-god, suspecting that he is a magician (γόης). Yet Apollonios descends anyway. He emerges from his oracular encounter seven days later in a different location with a book of Pythagorean wisdom.[4] Trophonios had apparently declared that Pythagorean philosophy is the best path to wisdom.

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[1] Lane Fox (1986), 197 (relying heavily on Robert [1968]), 168–171, 184–200.

[2] The term 'Neoplatonism' (and its cognates) is an artefact of eighteenth-century German scholarship, coined pejoratively to describe the movement inspired by Plotinus, as distinguished from Plato's school and from the so-called 'Middle Platonists'. These modern classifications are unsatisfactory: cf. Gerson (2010), 3; O'Meara (2003), 3, n. 1. I use the terms 'Neoplatonism' and 'Neoplatonists' (interchangeably with 'late Platonism' and 'late Platonists') as purely chronological designators, without the ideological assumptions often attached to them.

[3] Philostratus, *Vita Apollonii* 8.19–20, ed. Conybeare (1922).

[4] Possibly an allusion to Apolllonios' *On Pythagoras*, which Porphyry and Iamblichus probably drew on in composing their own Pythagorean works: O'Brien (2009), 27.

The second story concerns a female philosopher, Sosipatra, who grew up on her father's farm near Ephesus.[5] When she was five years old, two strangers appeared and persuaded the farm steward to let them care for the vines. The harvest was abundant and almost miraculous. The strangers liked the girl and asked her father if they could raise and educate her. Having seen their strange powers, Sosipatra's father departed, leaving his daughter in their hands. When he returned five years later, he hardly recognised her.[6] She invited him to ask her what had happened to him on his journey and then related everything to him as though she had been there herself. Her father was amazed and asked the men who they were; reluctantly, they revealed that they were 'initiates of the lore called Chaldean' (... παρέφηναν εἶναι τῆς Χαλδαϊκῆς καλουμένης σοφίας οὐκ ἀμύητοι...).[7] They gave the girl all the garments with which she had been initiated, certain mystical symbols and books, and then mysteriously disappeared, telling her that they were going to the Western Ocean. Sosipatra grew up 'fully initiated ... and filled with divine breath' (...τεθειασμένην καὶ σωφρόνως ἐνθουσιῶσαν ...). She had no other teachers but knew many philosophical, poetical and rhetorical works which she could expound easily. When she reached the appropriate age, she decided to marry the philosopher Eustathius. Before doing so, she prophesied the number of children they would have and their destinies, as well as Eustathius' own destiny: her words had the same force as 'an immutable oracle' (τῶν ἀκινήτων μαντειῶν). After Eustathius died, his fellow philosopher Aedesius helped Sosipatra raise her children. She held a chair of philosophy in her house in Pergamon and her students would go to her lecture after attending Aedesius' lectures: 'they positively adored and revered the woman's inspired teaching' (... τὸν δὲ τῆς γυναικὸς ἐνθουσιασμὸν προσεκύνει καὶ ἐσεβάζετο).

These stories concern figures connected with Neoplatonism: the first, Apollonios of Tyana, was a Neopythagorean philosopher, connected to the Neoplatonists through a shared respect and veneration of Pythagoras and his teachings.[8] In fact, both Porphyry and Iamblichus seem to have borrowed from Apollonios' *On Pythagoras* in their works on Pythagoras, while Porphyry also refers to Apollonios in an admiring tone several times in his *De abstinentia*.[9] Sosipatra was

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[5] Eunapius, *VS* 466–467, trs. Wright (1921; repr. 2005). All citations and translations of this work are taken from this edition.

[6] Eunapius, *VS* 468.

[7] Eunapius, *VS* 468.

[8] Fowden (1982), 36; O'Meara (1989); O'Brien (2009), 17–32.

[9] Porphyry, *VP* 2, ed. Des Places (1982); Iamblichus, *VP*, eds. Dillon and Hershbell (1991), 35.254–264, refers to Apollonios' biography of Pythagoras as one of his sources; Porphyry, *Abst.* 2.34.2; 3.3.6; Fowden (1982), 37 and n. 25; Dillon and Hershbell (1991), 9–10; 33, n. 1; O'Brien (2009), 27–28. It is debated whether the Apollonios referred to by Porphyry and Iamblichus is actually the Tyanaean: Rohde (1872), 23–24, argued that sections 3–25 of Iamblichus' work were taken from Apollonios; Lévy (1926), 104, concurs

one of the successors of Iamblichus' philosophical circle from Apamea: Aedesius and Eustathius were Iamblichus' pupils and carried on the school after the latter's death.[10] Both stories contain many of the themes to be explored in this book: the inextricable links between oracles, philosophy and books permeate both narratives, as do the connections between oracles, philosophical wisdom and knowledge. The first account involves a visit to one of the most famous public institutions of the ancient world: the oracular sanctuary. It also involves an accusation of 'magic' or 'sorcery' (γοητεία), a charge often levelled against philosophers who consulted oracles or used (or wrote about) divination, particularly (in Late Antiquity) by Christian polemicists. The second account relates how a female philosopher becomes an oracle herself, a prophetess, through her learning, philosophical training and, most importantly, her initiation into Chaldean mystical rites, the latter of which signifies that she was a theurgist. Theurgy (θεουργία), which literally means 'god-working' or 'divine work', was widely respected and extensively used by later Neoplatonist philosophers. Although its meaning is controversial, the term, first attested in the fragmentary *Chaldean Oracles* (dated to the mid to late second century A.D.), designates a set of ritual practices coupled with a way of life based on ethical and intellectual practices. The aim of theurgy was contact with, assimilation to and, ultimately, union with, the divine.[11]

This book will investigate the roles of oracles and other forms of divination within third and fourth century A.D. Neoplatonism. It will examine some of the central debates between pagan philosophers and Christian intellectuals on the nature of oracles and other types of divination as central elements of religious praxis and thought, examining the cultural, intellectual and religious contexts of such debates. Focusing particularly on two works dealing extensively with divination, Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* (Περὶ τῆς ἐκ λογίων φιλοσοφίας) and Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*, and using these works as central case studies, this book will explore the significance and centrality of divination in Neoplatonism.[12]

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and also assigned sections 28, 36–57, 215–221 and 254–264 of Iamblichus' work to Apollonios; *contra* Gorman (1985), 130–144.

[10] Eunapius, *VS* 458; 465; Iamblichus, *Letter 7*, *On Music*, is addressed to Eustathius: *Letters*, trs. Dillon and Polleichtner (2009). Cf. also Dillon (1973; repr. 2009), 14–15; Fowden (1982), 39; 41–42.

[11] The nature of theurgy: see pp. 24–40 below.

[12] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac*. eds. Girgenti and Muscolino (2011), 85–167. All quotations are from this new edition (translations of this work are my own), which includes: Appendix 1*: On Philosophy Revealed through Theosophy* (168–187), based on P.F. Beatrice's new reconstruction of *Anonymi Monophysitae Theosophia*; and Appendix II: Gustav Wolff's old redaction of the fragments of Porphyry's *Phil. Orac*. (189–278). Since only a selection of the latter are included in Andrew Smith's 1993 edition of Porphyrian fragments and since scholars dispute whether fragments of the *Theosophy* actually derive from *Phil. Orac*., I generally use only fragments which are securely attributed to *Phil. Orac*. in this study.

It will also examine Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* and Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica* in order to explore the role of oracles and divination within the religious, cultural and intellectual milieux of Late Antiquity. Throughout the book I argue that oracles and other types of 'inspired' divination were regarded by Neoplatonists as fundamental aspects of their philosophy: rationality and revelation were considered to be interlinked and complementary, mutually inclusive rather than mutally exclusive. More specifically, for Porphyry and Iamblichus, oracles constituted symbols (σύμβολα) of the gods, which comprised tools for philosophical contemplation, insight and initiation. This approach culminates in Iamblichus' view of the central place of divination within theurgic ritual, as an aid to and essential element of mystical union with the divine.

Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* sets in high relief the interconnections between philosophy and oracles and represents one of the most important texts produced by a Neoplatonist philosopher on oracles and traditional Graeco-Roman religion. However, this work survives only in forty-eight fragments (a few fragments are attested to in more than one ancient source) preserved in Christian polemical works, primarily Augustine's *City of God* and Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*, although some fragments are preserved by Theodoret, Firmicus Maternus, John Philoponus and within the anonymous *Tübingen Theosophy*.[13] Porphyry's work, whose date of composition is uncertain, is at heart an oracle collection. The preserved fragments contain a wide selection of oracles, possibly collected by Porphyry from the archives of oracular sanctuaries such as Delphi, Didyma and Claros, which are largely concerned with ritual instruction and the relationship and nature of various deities.[14] These oracles are attributed to various Graeco-Roman deities, primarily Apollo, but also Hekate, Asclepius, Hermes, Pan and Sarapis, and are sometimes cited with Porphyry's commentary on their philosophical meaning.[15]

Older editions (also consulted in preparing this study) of *Phil. Orac*. include Wolff (1856; repr. 1962) and Smith (1993a). Iamblichus, *DM*, eds. and trs. Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell (2003). All quotations and translations from this work are drawn from this edition, unless otherwise stated.

[13] Cf. Girgenti and Muscolino (2011), 85–187.

[14] The provenance of the oracles in *Phil. Orac.*: see pp. 18–20 below.

[15] The vast majority of extant oracles in the work are explicitly attributed to Apollo by Porphyry: *Phil. Orac*. 307F = Eusebius, *PE* 5.5.7–6.2; 309F = *PE* 5.6.4–5; 310F = *PE* 3.14.3–4; 311F = *PE* 3.14.5; 314F = *PE* 4.8.4–9.2; 315F = *PE* 4.9.3–7 (two short fragments of oracles); 322F = *PE* 5.15.6–16.1 (two oracles); 323F = *PE* 9.10.1–2; 324F = *PE* 9.10.3–5 (two oracles); 329F = *PE* 4.19.8–20.1 (three oracles); 330F = *PE* 5.14.1; 333F = *PE* 6.1. 2–3; 336F = *PE* 6.2.1 (two oracles); 338F = *PE* 6.2.2–3; 339F = *PE* 6.3.5–4.3; 341F = *PE* 6.5.2–4; 341aF = Philoponus, *De Opificio Mundi* 201.1–17; 343F = Augustine, *City of God* 19.22.17–23.17; 344F = *City of God* 10.23.30–37; 348F = *PE* 5.8.8–10 (two oracles); 349F = *PE* 5.8.11–12. One can also attribute an Apollonian origin to certain fragments which are not

Composed between A.D. 280 and 305 as a reply to Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo*, Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* includes a detailed examination of the varieties of contemporary divination and the operation of the oracular sanctuaries at Delphi, Didyma and Claros.[16] Iamblichus also examines the philosophical concepts and principles underlying divination and its role within theurgic ritual. In fact, this work comprises a comprehensive treatise on divination and theurgy, which encompasses Graeco-Roman religious tradition and civic cult. This treatise is one of the central works on religious phenomena to survive from Late Antiquity, recording contemporary uses of divination and other rituals as well as providing a programmatic account that sets out the parameters of theurgy (including the incorporation of religious practices, drawn under the aegis of theurgy) within a sophisticated metaphysical framework. It consequently acted as a powerful account and defence of the underlying principles, rationale and efficacy of theurgy and traditional religious practices, and is considered to have been widely influential upon later Neoplatonism.

Until recently, scholars have viewed Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* as a 'superstitious' work written early in his life before he met Plotinus: they claim that he later rejected these views under the 'rationalist' influence of Plotinus and became more hostile towards traditional religion.[17] This interpretation implicates Porphyry as inconsistent and is often accompanied by the view that some of the oracles he cites in this work are the inventions of Platonist philosophers.[18] Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*, and theurgy more generally, have been viewed as irrational and superstitious, a decisive move away from the rational Hellenism of Plotinus: for example, E.R. Dodds' influential assessment of this work as 'a manifesto of irrationalism, an assertion that the road to salvation is found not in reason but in ritual' typifies attitudes towards Iamblichus and his

explicitly attributed to Apollo: 334F = *PE* 6.1.4; 335F = *PE* 6.1.5–7. These two fragments form a homogeneous ensemble with 333F and 336F which are explicitly attributed to Apollo and are cited by Eusebius in a continuous block in *PE* 5. Cf. Busine (2005) 249. Oracles attributed to Hermes: 313F = *PE* 3.14.7. Oracles attributed to Hekate: 317F = *PE* 5.12.1–2; 319F = *PE* 5.13.3–4; 321F = *PE* 5.14.4–15.4; 328F = *PE* 4.23.7–9; 345F = Eusebius, *DE* 3.6.39–7.2; 345aF = *City of God* 19.23.43–73; 347F = *PE* 5.7.6–8.7 (five oracles). Oracles attributed to Pan: 320F = *PE* 5.14.2–3. Oracles attributed to Asclepius: 312F = *PE*. 3.14.6. Oracles attributed to Sarapis: 306F = Firmicus Maternus, *De errore profan. relig.* 13.4–5; 318F = *PE*. 5.13.1–2.

[16] Scholars generally agree that the *DM* was written within this specific period. For its assignation to c. A.D. 300 cf. Saffrey (1971), 231–233; Athanassiadi (1993), 116, n. 13. For a suggestion of A.D. 280 cf. Dillon (1973; repr. 2009), 13; 18. Cf. Chapter 4, pp. 158–159 and Clarke (2003), xxxi–xxxvii, for a comprehensive discussion of the pseudonym Abammon adopted by Iamblichus.

[17] Bidez (1913; repr. 1964), 14–16; followed by Dodds (1951), 287; Rist (1964), 225; Parke (1985), 205.

[18] Cf. for example, Fowden (1988), 179.

work.[19] Dodds' views on theurgy and the ritual aspects of Neoplatonism were deeply influenced by his encounters with mediumship and Spiritualism in Dublin, phenomena which he saw as analogous with Neoplatonic practices such as theurgy and divination.[20] While much recent revaluation has refined Dodds' stark picture, many scholars still tend to perceive a sharp, dichotomous division between the 'rationalist' approach of Plotinus and Porphyry towards religious phenomena and the 'irrational' ritualism of later Neoplatonist philosophers such as Iamblichus and Proclus.[21]

This book offers a reassessment of the roles of divination (and, to a certain extent, of traditional religion and theurgy) within Neoplatonism. I argue that Porphyry's oracles belong to a long and consistent tradition of oracles in specific places and from inspired individuals: his oracle collection has many ancient precedents and is firmly located within ancient religious tradition. I also suggest that Porphyry is more consistent in his views on ritual and religious praxis than has previously been recognised and, furthermore, he shares more similarities with Iamblichus in terms of his views on divination and theurgy than has been acknowledged. In relation to this, I argue that Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* is perfectly compatible with theurgy and that, in a broad sense, it constitutes a theurgic text which discusses theurgic ritual alongside traditional religious practices. Iamblichus reserves a central place in his system of theurgy for divination and integrates reason and revelation (an integration that may already be present in Porphyry's works) rather than viewing them as mutually exclusive phenomena through his implicit endorsement of theurgic ritual and divination as *supra-rational* phenomena, which transcend and act as the ultimate culmination of rationality rather than a lack thereof. To do so, I utilise anthropological, postcolonial and religious studies research that challenges the modern dichotomy between rationality and ritual, examining some implications of such challenges for understanding the involvement of Platonic philosophers in Late Antiquity with oracles and other forms of divination.[22]

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[19] Dodds (1951), 286–287; Geffcken (1978), 127–128; Des Places (1966), 12. Sheppard (1982), 212, n. 1 and n. 3, contains a summary of relevant scholarship.

[20] Dodds (1977), 62, 97–111. Cf. Dodds (1951), 289–291; 295–298 and Shaw's discussion: (1985), 4–5.

[21] Dodds (1965), 86; Boyancé (1955), 189–209; Lloyd (1967), 287–293; Smith (1974); (2004), 77; Fowden (1986), 127–131; Shaw (1995), 11–15; 231–238; Clarke (2003), 4–18; 119–121. Cf. Chapter 5. Scholars occasionally emphasise continuity, arguments further developed in this study: Smith (1974), 81; Armstrong (1987), 181–187. Shaw (1985); (1988); (1993); (1995); (1998); (1999); has provided a more balanced and sympathetic view of Iamblichean theurgy.

[22] Cf. especially Bell (1992); Asad (1993); Keller (2002).

Defining Oracles and Oracle-Collections

The English term 'oracle' is often used to refer to both the place in which the oracle was produced – the oracular sanctuary – and the oracular response. In Greek, this double sense is partially reflected in the term, τὸ μαντεῖον, which can mean either 'an oracular response' or 'the seat of an oracle'. Derivatives of this term also describe oracles: in particular, ἡ μαντική means 'the art or faculty of divination'.[23] Another set of terms is connected with the verb form χράω, meaning 'to proclaim, to give the needful answer': for example, ὁ χρησμός refers to 'the answer of an oracle, oracular response, an oracle'.[24] Another term, τὸ λόγιον, literally 'sacred utterance', was also used in the sense of an 'oracular response/utterance'; by the fifth century A.D., this term (in the plural) came to be used to describe the *Chaldean Oracles*. The above terms are used by ancient authors, often interchangeably, to refer to 'an oracle.' For the sake of clarity, I use 'Oracle' with capitalisation to refer to an oracular sanctuary and without capitalisation to refer to an oracular response.

As a working definition, I focus on the oracular utterance and define an 'oracle' as: 'An inspired utterance thought to be derived from a supernatural source (usually a deity) and obtained through some form of ritual, frequently utilising mythical language and epic diction.' As well as oracles obtained from public sanctuaries, this definition allows for the inclusion of responses produced in the course of private rituals, such as those preserved in the *PGM*, as well as the declarations produced by a philosopher (whose mind was thought to be close to the divine) during the course of a ritual.[25] This definition also takes into account oracle collections containing oracles attributed to legendary figures, such as Bakis, Museaus and the Sibyl, distributed by itinerant professional oracle-collectors (χρησμολόγοι; singular: ὁ χρησμολόγος) and less clearly attached to a specific place, as well as including itinerant diviners and prophets whose utterances were considered to be 'oracles' (sometimes also called χρησμολόγοι or, more commonly, 'seers', μάντεις; singular: ὁ μάντις).[26] Oracle collections circulated

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[23] Liddell and Scott (1843; repr. 1996), also s.v. μαντεία; τὸ μάντευμα.

[24] Potter (1994) 10–12; Liddell and Scott (1843; repr. 1996), s.v. χρησμός; s.v. χρησμῳδία (oracular answer, prophecy); s.v. χρηστήριον ('the seat of an oracle' or 'an oracular response').

[25] Cf. Lane Fox (1986), 205. The *PGM* are a body of papyri from Graeco-Roman Egypt; the extant texts date from the second century B.C. to the fifth century A.D.: Preisendanz (1928–31); Betz (1986), xli–liii.

[26] The term μάντις was also often used to refer to the prophet(ess) at an oracular sanctuary and to the deity from whom the oracle was considered to derive: cf. Liddell and Scott (1843; repr. 1996), s.v. μάντις; s.v. προφήτης (feminine equivalent: ἡ προφῆτις); s.v. πρόμαντις; Maurizio (1995), 70; Dillery (2005), 168–172. χρησμολόγοι: Parke and Wormell (1956b), xv–xviii; Fontenrose (1978), 145–165; Parke (1988), 17–18; 102–103;

in Greece from at least the Classical period onwards and cities which consulted Oracles probably kept archives or collections of their received responses: Sparta seems to have kept such an official record.[27] These oracle collections comprise important precedents for Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*, which can therefore be located firmly in ancient tradition. Oracles attibuted to the Sibyl circulated throughout Classical and Hellenistic Greece and were perhaps the most famous and respectable oracle collections in Antiquity.[28] From at least the early Republic onwards, the Roman state kept a collection of oracles attributed to the Sibyl, the *Libri Sibyllini* (Sibylline books), in the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus and a special priesthood, the *quindecimviri*, regularly consulted them on matters of state, including ritual prescriptions and the institutions of new cults and festivals.[29] All of these Sibylline oracles are lost, apart from a few scattered citations; the only extant collection, the *Oracula Sibyllina*, was compiled by a Byzantine scholar in the fixth or sixth century A.D.[30]

Sibylline oracles are not discussed within this book, since the Neoplatonist philosophers under examination here do not use them and make little, if any, mention of them. The reasons for this are unknown. However, Hellenistic Jews had appropriated and modified Sibylline oracles since the third century B.C. and Late Antique Christian writers such as Lactantius also used them and incorporated the figure of the Sibyl (re-characterised as being inspired to prophesy by the Christian God) into the Christian tradition.[31] Thus, it seems likely that Neoplatonist philosophers chose to ignore them because they had been appropriated and thus, in their view, 'tainted' by Jewish and Christian elements. The Jewish and Christian interpolations of the Sibylline oracles would probably have rendered them worthless to Neoplatonists such as Porphyry who was an active opponent of the Christians. This supposition is supported by the fact that the Platonist philosopher Celsus had accused the Christians of interpolating 'many blasphemous things' (πολλὰ βλάσφημα) into the Sibylline oracles.[32]

The other major oracle collection known from Late Antiquity was the *Chaldean Oracles*, a mystical collection of oracles written in Greek hexameter poems which set out a complex metaphysical and cosmological system and establish a set of

174–189: Appendix 1; Potter (1990), 103–104; (1994), 95–97; Dillery (2005), 167–231. Itinerant diviners and prophets: Dillery (2005), 168–172; Flower (2008).

[27] Herodotus 6.57.2; 2.10; 15.5; Parke and Wormell (1956b), xiv.

[28] Cf. Pausanias 10.12; Plutarch, *De Pyth. or.* 398c; Parke (1988), 6–10; 29–35; 100–135; Potter (1990), 103–109; 133–134; (1994), 72–79; 98; Lightfoot (2007), 3–18.

[29] Parke (1988), 77; 136–138; 190–215; Potter (1990), 109–114; (1994), 74.

[30] *Oracula Sibyllina* (Books 1–2): Lightfoot (2007); Book 13: Potter (1990), 95–102. Cf. Parke (1988), 1–6; Potter (1994), 87–93.

[31] Parke (1988), 1–11; 152–173; Lightfoot (2007), vii–ix; Potter (1994), 75–77.

[32] Origen, *Contra Celsum* 7.53.19–20, ed. Borret (1969). Cf. also 7.56.1–4; 5.61.34–37; Potter (1994), 87.

metaphysical, ethical and ritual instructions for the salvation of the soul.[33] This corpus of oracles, which was believed to have been spoken by the gods to a father and son called Julian the Chaldean and Julian the Theurgist respectively, was written between the mid second and early third centuries A.D..[34] However, the term 'Chaldean' was not applied to this collection until several centuries after their composition; earlier authors who quoted the *Oracles* generally referred to them as 'the sacred oracles' (τὰ ἱερὰ λόγια) or (most frequently) simply as 'the oracles' (τὰ λόγια).[35] Many of the extant oracles are delivered in the first person by a deity, who often identifies him or herself by name: most frequently, oracles are attributed to Hekate and Apollo.[36] The *Chaldean Oracles* survive now only in 226 fragments quoted by later authors such as Proclus, Damascius and Michael Psellus. The collection was used extensively by Neoplatonist philosophers: Porphyry seems to have been the first to use them.[37] He, Iamblichus and Proclus all wrote

[33] *Chald. Or.* ed. and trs. Majercik (1989); Proclus *In Tim*. I.408.12 (Diehl); Dodds (1961), 263; Majercik (1989), 1; Athanassiadi (1999), 149; Finamore and Johnston (2010), 161.

[34] Although the precise dating remains uncertain, scholarly consensus agrees on a date of the mid to late second century: Johnston (1990), 2, n. 5, contains a comprehensive summary of scholarship. The *Suida* desribes Julian the Theurgist as the author of oracles in hexameters who lived at the time of Marcus Aurelius and Julian the Chaldean as his father and a philosopher: *Suida* II.642.I, s.v.' Ιουλιανός, 434: λόγια δι' ἐπῶν, II.641.32 s.v.' Ιουλιανός, Julian the Theurgist is also described as the author of works on θεουργικά and τελεστικά (theurgy and statue divination). Cf. Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 3, n. 1; 4, n. 2; Dodds (1961), 263; Majercik (1989), 1–2.

[35] The Neoplatonic passages which refer to the λόγια as direct divine revelation have been collected by Theiler (1942), 2. Cf. Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 443–447; Athanassiadi (1999), 149.

[36] Hekate's name is mentioned in the following fragments of the *Chaldean Oracles*: F32; F35; F50; F52; F221 (*fragmentum dubium*). Cf also F53; F72; F147; *fragmenta dubia:* F211; F219; F220; F222; F223; F224. Although Apollo's name is not explicitly mentioned in the extant fragments, Damascius cites several fragments which he attributes to the 'oracle-giving god': Damascius, I.155.15 and II.16.6: φησὶ...ὁ χρησμῳδῶν θεός; Damascius II.88.7–8: ὁ χρησμῳδῶν. As Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 6, notes, the oracle-giving god *par excellence* is Apollo: thus, he is evidently considered as one of the utterers of the *Chaldean Oracles*. Proclus, *In. Crat.* 101.3, links Chaldean priests with Apollo. One fragment seems to refer directly to Apollo himself: *Or. Chald*. F71 (= Proclus, *In Crat.* 98.14–15). Cf. Johnston (1990), 4.

[37] *Suida* IV.178.22; Damascius, *De Princip*. Section VII. 43, refers to a commentary on oracles written by Porphyry within the context of Chaldean theology; Marinus, *Proc.* 26, refers to 'the voluminous works of Porphyry' on the *Chaldean Oracles*, demonstrating that Porphyry wrote more than one work on Chaldean theology; Lydus, *De Mens*. 110.18–25 (F365 in Girgenti and Muscolini [2011], 320–321), refers to a commentary on oracles written by Porphyry in the context of a discussion of the Demiurge and cites the views of Julian the Chaldean, demonstrating that he refers to a commentary on the *Chaldean Oracles*; Lydus, *De Mens.* 159.5–8 (F366 in Girgenti and Muscolini [2011], 320–321), mentions

commentaries on the *Oracles*, but these are lost; Iamblichus refers to the *Oracles* and possibly paraphrases them in *De Mysteriis*.[38] The mystical, ethical and ritual instructions contained in the *Oracles* comprise our earliest evidence for theurgy: according to ancient tradition, the elder Julian invented the term 'theurgy' and developed the practices it describes; although the term 'theurgy' (θεουργία) does not appear in the extant fragments, the related plural form of the noun 'theurgist' (θεουργοί) does; furthermore, these terms are not found in any extant literature earlier than the *Oracles*.[39] Thus, the *Oracles* are generally treated as co-extensive with theurgy. Although Iamblichus identifies the roots of theurgy jointly in the Egyptian, Chaldean and Greek religious traditions, the *Chaldean Oracles* were crucial in the formation of theurgy as understood and practised by the Neoplatonists.[40] Regrettably, the *Chaldean Oracles* are not examined in any detail within this book due to space limitations but will be treated in a separate, future study. This forthcoming study will argue that the *Chaldean Oracles* represent the paradigmatic example of inspired, theurgic divination for the Neoplatonists (from Porphyry onwards) and, from this perspective, it is almost certain that the collection represented a set of discrete oracles rather than a continuous and lengthy poem.[41] Furthermore, the mythological idiom in which the *Oracles* are presented (particularly the terminology of light and fire used to delineate the Empyrean or intelligible realm) and its combination with complex metaphysical schemas and hierarchies, as well as Neoplatonic views of the origins of the *Chaldean Oracles* as the result of one of the Juliani becoming divinely possessed and being in contact with Plato's soul and the gods, neatly exemplify the interconnected and mutually inclusive nature of rationality and revelation in the Chaldean system and within late Platonism. Moreover, both Porphyry's view of the initiatory nature of oracles and Iamblichus' view of theurgy as based on divine love and involving different stages (including the use of contemplation and 'immaterial' types of ritual) are already present in the *Oracles*, which use mystery cult language and terminology and which present theurgy as entailing a continuum of ritual action, from material to immaterial practices.[42]

Ancient people generally trusted oracular sanctuaries, as their long lifespan (with Oracles in general operating for well over a thousand years in the Graeco-

Porphyry's citation of 'Chaldean philosophy'; Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 7–8, n. 19, 449; Edwards (2000a), 96, n. 272; Smith (2010), 346; Muscolino (2011), clxiv–clxix. Plotinus' possible use of the *Chaldean Oracles*: Dillon (1992), 131; 140.

38 Cf. Marinus, *Proc.* 26; Finamore and Johnston (2010), 161; Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 449–456; Cremer (1969); Des Places (1971), 18–57.

39 Cf. *Chald. Or.* F153 (= Lydus, *De mens*. II.10; 31.16–19); Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 461–466; Majercik (1989), 21; Johnston (1990), 80.

40 Cf. Chapter 7, pp. 277–280; Fowden (1982), 132; 134 and n. 76.

41 Cf. Addey (forthcoming a), 1–44.

42 Addey (forthcoming a), 1–44. Cf. also p. 27 and n. 141 below.

Roman world) and the numerous offerings and dedications found at Oracles attest.[43] Some scholars draw a distinction between public Oracles as genuine and those produced by prophets or other individuals not connected to an institution as 'false'.[44] Although oracular sanctuaries did have the authority of institutional tradition, privately produced oracles were often seen as genuine. For the Greeks, it was the god who gave the oracle its status of truth: if the god was deemed absent (or the divine inspiration was distorted by lower, material causes so that the god's words could not be received clearly), then the oracle was considered false. Unusually, the Epicureans maintained the existence of the gods, but denied that they intervened in the human world in any way, thus taking a sceptical stance towards divination.[45] However, such views represent a minority and, if divination was perceived as not working or an oracle turned out to be false (disproved by the course of events or circumstances) ancient authors were far more likely either to accuse the prophet(ess) or the interpreter of being corrupt or ineffective, or to question the client's own interpretation of the oracle, rather than to question the deity who was ultimately thought to produce the oracle.[46] For example, Lucian's *Alexander the False Prophet* attacks the oracular cult of Glycon established by Alexander of Abonouteichos, but its main target is Alexander himself.[47] In Antiquity, it was often claimed that Apollo, god of oracles and truth *par excellence*, could not lie. Indeed Platonic conceptions of divinity often involved an intrinsic association of divinity with truth, a subject which has important implications for the connections between rationality and ritual.

A further problem of terminology relates to definitions of ancient religions. I often use the (vague) terms 'traditional Graeco-Roman religious practices' and 'Graeco-Roman religious tradition' (interchangeably) to refer to traditional Graeco-Roman religion, including civic cult, which was polytheistic. Occasionally I use the term 'pagan', especially when discussing pagan–Christian debates concerning oracles, but with hesitancy because of its problematic nature. Since it was not used by followers of traditional Graeco-Roman religious praxis themselves, but was invented by Christians in a polemical attempt to systematise and dismiss the loosely knit amalgamation of traditional Graeco-Roman cults,

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[43] Curnow (2004), 11–12. Cf. Cicero, *Div.* 1.2.3.

[44] Burkert (1985), 117; Lane Fox (1986), 197–198; 202–205; Athanassiadi (1992), 48; Edwards (2000a), 40, n. 227, n. 229; Lewis (2006), 19.

[45] Long (1974), 41–49; Long and Sedley (1987; repr. 1999), 139–148; Potter (1994), 49–57. Although beyond the parameters of this study, it should be noted that Stoic philosophers often exhibited favourable attitudes towards divination.

[46] Ammianus Marcellinus 21.1.7–14 (especially 12–14); Cicero, *Div.* 1.55.124; Potter (1994), 51–52.

[47] Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet* 1–5; 9; 11–14; 19; 22–24; 26; 31–32; 36; 42; 45; 58–60.

the term is less than satisfactory.[48] It is used here because there are few viable alternatives when discussing the religious thought and praxis of Porphyry and Iamblichus: I occasionally use 'polytheism', but this is vague and may simplify the theological and metaphysical system of Neoplatonism, which was simultaneously polytheistic and henotheistic.[49] The term 'Hellene', used to describe followers of traditional Graeco-Roman religion, imports a fourth-century cultural agenda: it was used dismissively by early Christians and later reclaimed by followers of traditional Graeco-Roman religion, especially by the emperor Julian; fourth-century Christians reacted by pointing out that they are also Greek.[50] Porphyry and Iamblichus both held that within all polytheistic cultures a common religious truth was taught; although this truth may receive diverse expressions, it was largely held to be homogeneous by these philosophers.

Oracles and Divination in the Platonic Tradition and Neoplatonism

It is important to note that an interest in divination was nothing new in the Platonic tradition: Plato's dialogues frequently allude to and generally exhibit a positive approach towards divination. Plato's *Phaedrus* states unambiguously that the greatest blessings come to humans through 'divine *mania*' and prophetic inspiration, maintaining that the prophetesses at Delphi and Dodona, the Sibyl and other prophetic figures have conferred great benefits upon Greece; meanwhile the *Laws* maintains the need for frequent recourse to oracles for advice on important affairs of state in the ideal city.[51] Within his dialogues, Plato portrays Socrates, his philosopher *par excellence*, as frequently guided by a mysterious type of divination: Socrates often speaks of a *daimonion*, which he calls a divine 'voice' (φωνή), 'sign' (σημεῖον) and his 'customary divination' (ἡ εἰωθυῖά μοι μαντικὴ ἡ τοῦ δαιμονίου), which often speaks to him, giving negative admonitions.[52] In the *Apology*, Socrates connects the *daimonion* within the divine origin of his philosophical mission to engage others in *elenchus*, by commenting several times on the silence of the *daimonion* during the course of his defence speech, which largely rests on the oracle received from Delphi,

[48] Athanassiadi (1999), 4–7; Fowden (1988), 176.

[49] Cf. Addey (2010), 149–165; Athanassiadi (1999), 149–183; Mitchell and Van Nuffelen (2010).

[50] Clark (2000b), 30.

[51] Plato, *Phdr.* 244a8–c3; *Leg.* 6.772d; 5.738b3–e2; 8.828a1–7; 11.914a1–7.

[52] Socrates' *daimonion* as a divine 'voice': *Phdr.* 242c2; *Ap.* 31d4. Divine 'sign': *Euthyd.* 272e5; *Resp.* VI, 496c4; *Phdr.* 242c1; *Ap.* 40b1–2, 40c3, 41d7. Customary divination: *Ap.* 40a4. Socrates as a *mantis*: *Phd.* 85b4–6; *Phdr.* 242c5–7. Cf. also *Cra.* 396d1–4; Zeller (1877), 89; McPherran (1996), 187; (2005), 17; Reeve (2000), 24–39; Bussanich (2006), 206–208; Addey (2014), 52–53.

perceived by Socrates as the catalyst of his philosophical mission.[53] Moreover, Plato depicts Socrates as experiencing divinely inspired dreams which he interpreted himself: in *Crito*, Socrates dreams that a woman dressed in white tells him the day of his death while in the *Phaedo*, Socrates interprets a dream that causes him to take up the writing of poetry.[54] Plato's positive comments on divination were further developed within the Platonic tradition. From the mid-fourth century B.C., some philosophers produced treatises on Oracles or collections of oracles. Heraclides Ponticus, a pupil of Plato, wrote a work entitled *Concerning Oracle-centres* (περὶ χρηστηρίων), an antiquarian work dealing with the most prominent oracle centres and prophets. During the Second Sophistic, Plutarch, a Middle Platonist philosopher and a priest at Delphi, wrote several dialogues about the Delphic Oracle.[55] Other philosophers also produced oracle collections: Mnaeseas of Patara, a pupil of Eratosthenes, published a work entitled *Collection of Delphic oracles* (χρησμῶν Δελφικῶν συναγωγή).[56] According to Cicero, the Stoic philosopher Chrysippus compiled a collection of oracular responses, together with proof of their truthfulness and fulfilment.[57] A philosopher with Neoplatonic affinities, Cornelius Labeo, wrote a work entitled *On the Oracle of Apollo of Claros* (*De oraculo Apollonis Clarii*), which is only extant in a few fragments, but probably consisted in a theological or philosophical commentary on a collection of oracles from Claros.[58] Labeo's *floruit* is uncertain, but scholarly consensus places him in the third century A.D.[59] His collection and philosophical approach seem to have similarities with Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*, with parallels in their concern to offer a syncretistic defence of a wide variety of ritual practices and religious folklore.[60] Thus, Porphyry was by no means the first philosopher to compile an oracle collection; rather, he was following a tradition stretching back to at least the mid-fourth century B.C. In a broader sense, when late Platonist philosophers wrote about and endorsed the use of divination, they were expanding on positive accounts of divination already well-established within the Platonic tradition.

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[53] Plato, *Ap.* 40a4–8; 40c1–4; 41d6–8. This connection is also supported by Socrates' statement at *Ap.* 33c5–9. Cf. Brickhouse and Smith (2000), 77; McPherran (1996), 2; 7; 178; 208–229; Bussanich (2006), 203–204.

[54] Plato, *Cri.* 44a10–b2; *Phd.* 60e4–61b7. Cf. Finamore (1998), 156.

[55] Plutarch, *De Pyth. or.*; *De E Apud Delphos*; *De def. or*. Cf. Chapter 7, p. 245, n. 24; n. 25.

[56] Parke and Wormell (1956b), xv–xvi; Parke (1988), 24–25; Procl. *In Tim*. 1.90.21–24.

[57] Cicero, *Div.* 1.19.37; 1.3.6. Cf. Parke and Wormell (1956b), xvii.

[58] Cf. Mastandrea (1979); Lane Fox (1986), 180; Athanassiadi (1992), 51; 55; Goulet (2005), 61–63.

[59] Mastandrea (1979), 193; Goulet (2005), 61–62.

[60] Athanassiadi (1992), 55; Mastandrea (1979), 14–102.

Oracles and Philosophy in the Second Sophistic and Late Antiquity

Modern historiographical and anthropological accounts of Greek oracles have often focused on the paradigm of Delphi in the Classical period, regarded as the Greek Oracle *par excellence*.[61] Scholarship on Greek divination has traditionally been dominated by a historical model which emphasised the political role of Classical Greek Oracles and perceived only decline after the fourth century B.C. (especially with the later arrival of the Romans in Greece).[62] Late Antique Christian efforts to replace oracles with biblical λόγια (inspired utterances from God) and the rise of the Christian 'holy man' whose personal pronouncements apparently superseded oracles, have been seen as contributing towards the decline of oracles in Late Antiquity.[63] However, recent work on the Oracles of Asia Minor and on the roles of oracles in the Second Sophistic has shifted the emphasis away from the Delphic Oracle and challenged the view of Greek oracles in decline from the Hellenistic period onwards.[64] Much evidence suggests the continuity of oracles and divination, including epigraphic evidence showing that oracular sanctuaries, particularly Claros and Didyma, maintained a high level of consultation, which increased during the second century A.D. and continued well into the third.[65] The success of oracular establishments during the second century A.D. is shown by the fury that their popularity provoked in their critics, such as Oenomaus of Gadara and Lucian.[66] Moreover, Late Antique Christian polemical works attacking oracles as a central element of traditional Graeco-Roman religions actually imply continuing use, given the likelihood that their vehement attacks were provoked by the widespread continuation

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[61] Oppé (1904), 214–240; Holland (1933), 201–214; Parke (1939); Latte (1940), 9–18; Parke and Wormell (1956a); (1956b); Flacelière (1965), 60–72; 73–85; Fontenrose (1978); Wood (2003); Arnush (2005), 97–110; Bowden (2005). Cf. Eidinow (2007), 3–4 for a comprehensive discussion.

[62] The argument for decline is partially based on Plutarch, *De def. or.* 412a. Yet *De Pyth. or.* 409a–c, written later, discusses the oracular revival of Delphi. Cf. Parke and Wormell (1956b), ix; Lane Fox (1986), 201–202.

[63] Cf. especially Brown (1971a), 99–100.

[64] Cf. for example, Lane Fox (1986), 150–153; 177–179; 259–261; Levin (1989), 1599–1649; Lewis (2006).

[65] Robert (1954), 540–543; Lane Fox (1986), 177–178; 200–202; 205–207; Athanassiadi (1992), 46.

[66] Athanassiadi (1992), 47; 49–50; (1993), 115. Cf. Chapter 3 for Eusebius' use of Oenomaus; Oenomaus F14, ed. Hammerstaedt (1988) = Eusebius, *PE* 5.22.1–6; F15 = *PE* 5.23.1–3; F2 = *PE* 5.34.2–17; F6 = *PE* 5.24; F7 = *PE* 5.25.1–8; F8 = 5.26.1–3. Cf. Parke and Wormell (1956b), xi–xii; Potter (1994), 52–54. The probable dating of Oenomaus to the second century A.D.: Hammerstaedt (1988), 18 (see 11–18 for a summary of relevant scholarship). Cf. Goulet (2005), 751–753.

and utilisation of oracles.[67] Many philosophers were linked with oracles in the Second Sophistic and Late Antique periods. Plutarch's *Delphic Dialogues* depict the kind of intellectuals who could be found at the Delphic Oracle.[68] These dialogues, although consisting of literary settings, show the oracular sanctuary as a place of lively philosophical discussion and cultural exchange.[69] In Heliodorus' *Ethiopian Tales*, philosophers are found discussing the nature of Egyptian gods and cults at the Delphic Oracle of the fourth century A.D.[70]

It is within this vibrant intellectual, cultural and religious milieux that the Neoplatonist philosophers Porphyry (c. A.D. 234–c.305 and Iamblichus (c.240–c.325) played an important role. Rather than giving full, biographical details of the lives and works of these philosophers, I include some observations relevant to their involvement with religious and ritual practices.[71] Porphyry had been a student of Plotinus. As well as editing Plotinus' writings as the *Enneads*, Porphyry wrote a *Life of Plotinus*, from which much of our biographical information on Porphyry himself is derived.[72] Significantly, within the *Life*, Porphyry claims that Plotinus' philosophical writing was undertaken with divine inspiration and guidance.[73] This suggests that, for Porphyry, philosophical contemplation and discursive rationality are potentially linked with divine inspiration (and, consequently, divination). Porphyry also describes his recitation of a poem entitled *The Sacred Marriage* at the celebratory feast of Plato's birthday, contrasting the reactions of the audience and Plotinus:

> ...τινος διὰ τὸ μυστικῶς πολλὰ μετ' ἐνθουσιασμοῦ ἐπικεκρυμμένως εἰρῆσθαι εἰπόντος μαίνεσθαι τὸν Πορφύριον, ἐκεῖνος εἰς ἐπήκοον ἔφη πάντων· 'ἔδειξας ὁμοῦ καὶ τὸν ποιητὴν καὶ τὸν φιλόσοφον καὶ τὸν ἱεροφάντην.'
>
> ... because many things were mystically and enigmatically stated in a rapturous style, someone exclaimed that Porphyry was raving; but he [i.e. Plotinus] said in

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67 Lane Fox (1986), 201.

68 Cf. p. 13, n. 55 above; Chapter 7, p. 245, n. 24; n. 25.

69 Brenk (1977), 90–91; Lane Fox (1986), 184–187; 713 n. 51 and 55.

70 Heliodorus, *Aethiopica* 3. The date of Heliodorus' work is disputed, with dates of the second, third and fourth centuries A.D. proposed: for a comprehensive summary see Morgan (2003), 417–421, who argues for a date of composition between A.D. 350 and 375.

71 Biographical details of Porphyry: Smith (1987), 719–722; (2010), 325–357. Iamblichus: Dillon (1973; repr. 2009), 3–18; (1987), 862–909; (2004), 407–410; (2010), 358–374; Clarke (2003), xviii–xxvi.

72 Porphyry, *Plot.* ed. and trs. Armstrong (1966). All citations and translations are taken from this edition, unless otherwise stated. Cf. also Finamore (2005), 49–61; Smith (2010), 325–326.

73 Porphyry, *Plot.* 23.18–21.

> the hearing of all, 'You have proved yourself simultaneously a poet, a philosopher and a teacher of sacred truth (τὸν ἱεροφάντην).'[74]

Whether or not this episode is historically accurate, it clearly shows that for Porphyry, philosophy, poetry and religious ritual were complementary and intrinsically linked. A further anecdote refers to a visit of an Egyptian priest who asked Plotinus to come to a visible invocation of his personal *daimon* at the Iseum in Rome; when the *daimon* was invoked, a god rather than a *daimon* apparently came forth.[75] Intriguingly, Porphyry claims that this event inspired Plotinus to write his treatise on 'the *daimon* who is allotted to us' (Περὶ τοῦ εἰληχότος ἡμᾶς δαίμονος), an interesting case of a ritual inspiring philosophical work which again attests to Porphyry's view of the mutually linked nature of ritual and philosophy, and rationality and divine inspiration.[76] At the culmination of the treatise, Porphyry includes a lengthy oracle of Apollo on the destiny of the soul of Plotinus.[77]

Porphyry may have taught Iamblichus; at the very least they were very well acquainted.[78] Porphyry dedicated his work *On the Maxim 'Know Thyself'*, a Delphic theme, to Iamblichus. Iamblichus asserts in his *De anima* that he had 'heard' (ἀκούω) Porphyry propound a certain doctrine.[79] With regard to the life of Iamblichus, most of our information is gleaned from a biography by Eunapius from which solid information is difficult to extract and a somewhat superficial picture of Iamblichus emerges.[80] However, Eunapius was a pupil of Chrysanthius, himself a pupil of Iamblichus' pupil Aedesius, which makes him a valuable witness. It is known that Iamblichus established his philosophical school in Syria (probably after completing his studies with Porphyry), almost certainly in Apamea, already notable as the birthplace (and possible place of work) of Numenius, and the town to which Plotinus' pupil Amelius had retired in the late 260s.[81] Apamea's reputation

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[74] Porphyry, *Plot*. 15.2–6, ed. Armstrong (1966); trs. Edwards (2000a), alluding to the three kinds of divine madness discussed in Plato, *Phdr*. 244a–245a. Cf. Edwards (2000a), 26, n. 145.

[75] Porphyry, *Plot.* 10.15–34.

[76] Plotinus, *Enn.* III.4; Porphyry, *Plot.* 10.

[77] Porphyry, *Plot*. 22–23. Cf. Chapter 2, pp. 75–77.

[78] Eunapius, *VS* 458. Cf. Dillon (1987), 866–869; (2004), 406; Clarke (2003), xxi–xxii; Smith (2010), 355.

[79] Clarke (2003), xxi-xxii, especially xxii, n. 29, for reservations about the meaning of this verb in this context.

[80] Dillon (1987), 863; (2010), 358.

[81] Eunapius, *VS* 458; Julian, *Letter* 78, 417a–b, mentions giving this letter to an imperial guard who was 'a native of Apamea' ('Απαμεὺς τὸ γένος) to deliver because he was going home and knew Iamblichus very well; although this letter is considered apocryphal, it may well have been written by another admirer of Iamblichus and certainly indicates that

as 'beloved of the gods' (θεοῖς φίλη) adds to the likelihood that Iamblichus set up school there: the city remained a vigorous centre of 'pagan' religion well into the reign of Theodosius I, continuing to worship Zeus-Belos even when the cult was officially forbidden.[82] Eunapius portrays Iamblichus surrounded by his followers, including Sopater, Aedesius, Eustathius, Theodorus and Euphrasius.[83] A vital element of Iamblichus' school involved ritual practices: Eunapius describes the collective performance of sacrificial ritual followed by conversation about the gods in keeping with the ritual.[84] This is particularly interesting since it indicates that there was no division between ritual practice and philosophical views. Eunapius also reports that 'Occasionally, however, he did perform certain rites alone, apart from his friends and disciples, when he worshipped the divine' (ὀλίγα μὲν οὖν χωρὶς τῶν ἑταίρων καὶ ὁμιλητῶν ἔπραττεν ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ, τὸ θεῖον σεβαζόμενος), probably alluding to prayer, divination, meditation and contemplation practices.[85] Iamblichus was believed by his followers and later successors to have had special access to the gods and to have been divinely inspired in his philosophical teaching and way of life. He was given the honorific title 'divine' (θεῖος) by his Neoplatonic successors.[86] Eunapius speaks of his 'divine inspiration' and 'practice of divination' (θειασμὸν Ἰαμβλίχου) and asserts '... because he practised justice he gained an easy access to the ears of the gods' (δικαιοσύνην δὲ ἀσκήσας, εὐηκοΐας ἔτυχε θεῶν).[87] Eunapius also attributes enigmatic, ritual acts to Iamblichus, crediting him with displays of intuition and ritual power, although these were performed either reluctantly or in private. Iamblichus' students were convinced that when engaged in prayer and meditative contemplation, he levitated and turned golden, a notion dismissed by Iamblichus. Eunapius also reports that Iamblichus changed the direction of a journey in which he and his philosophical circle were engaged because he knew that a funeral procession had recently passed on the road, a story which assumes prophetic knowledge on Iamblichus' part. On another occasion, he is said to have invoked two water-spirits, identified as Eros and Anteros, to appear while at the hot springs at Gadara with his students.[88]

Iamblichus was well known in Apamea. Cf. Dillon (1973; repr. 2009), 11–12; (1987), 864, 869–870; (2004), 407; (2010), 372; Clarke (2003), xxiii.

[82] The Christian bishop Markellos of Apamea, who destroyed the temple of Zeus-Belos, was murdered when attempting to demolish another temple in approximately A.D. 389: Fowden (1982), 41.

[83] Eunapius, *VS* 458–459.

[84] Eunapius, *VS* 458–459.

[85] Eunapius, *VS* 458; 461; trs. Wright (1921), with slight emendations.

[86] Cf. for example, Julian, *Letter 2: To Priscus* 10–12; *Letter* 74, 420d–421a, compares hearing Iamblichus' voice to receiving an oracle of Apollo.

[87] Eunapius, *VS* 458.

[88] Eunapius, *VS* 458–460. Cf. Watts (2006), 89.

Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*

Content and Methodological Issues

As we have seen, Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* was at heart an oracle collection, which both accords with the contemporary milieu and is firmly located within ancient religious and cultural tradition.[89] The provenance of the oracles cited by Porphyry remains uncertain in many cases. Porphyry does not seem to use famous Delphic oracles from the Archaic and Classical periods within his work, but rather collected oracles from his own period, produced a short time before he wrote his work.[90] Two of the surviving oracles contained in the collection are thought to be genuine products of the Oracle at Didyma since in both cases Porphyry names Didyma as their source: the first is attributed to 'Apollo of Branchidae' (ὁ ἐν Βραγχίδαις Ἀπόλλων) while the second is attributed to the 'Didymaean Apollo' (ὁ Διδυμαῖος).[91] We can also add 344F, cited by Augustine, which is attributed by Lactantius to the Milesian Apollo.[92] Thus, only three fragments can be attributed with certainty to the Oracle of Didyma, although the first oracle cited in 322F, which comments on the decline of oracular sanctuaries, possibly originates from Didyma since it refers to Delphi and Claros in the first line.[93]

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[89] Cf. pp. 8, 13 above.

[90] Parke and Wormell (1956a), 287; (1956b), xi; Busine (2005), 252–253.

[91] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 307F = *PE* 5.5.7–6.2, lines 16–17; 309F = *PE* 5.6.4–5, line 4; Parke (1985), 89; Busine (2005), 253; *contra* Fontenrose (1988), oracle no. 45, 158, 217–218.

[92] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 344F = Augustine, *City of God* 19.23 = Lactantius, *De Ira Dei* 23.12.

[93] Parke and Wormell (1956a), 291, n. 16. Athanassiadi (1992), 51; (1999), 178–179, argues that Porphyry's *Phil. Orac*. comprised a collection based on oracles solely from Didyma, thus acting as a 'counterpart' to the collection of oracles from Claros compiled by his contemporary Cornelius Labeo, suggesting that both philosophers probably responded to invitations to conduct research in the archives of the oracular sanctuaries. The first part of this thesis is extremely unlikely, given that Porphyry explicitly attributes at least three oracles to the Oracle at Didyma: if the whole collection was derived from Didyma, Porphyry presumably would not need to specifically introduce oracles as 'Didymaean' at all, since such details would be unnecessary. Furthermore, the variety of metrical forms (including iambics) evident in oracles attributed to Apollo in Porphyry's collection suggests that some of these oracles originate from Claros and other oracular sanctuaries besides Didyma: the epigraphic evidence of oracular responses from Claros and Didyma, which many client cities inscribed publicly upon returning from their consultation, indicate that Didyma and Claros tended to prefer different metres. At Didyma, almost all surviving oracles are cast in hexameters, while at Claros oracles are preserved in a variety of metres, including hexameters, iambics and more complex metrical forms: Buresch (1889), 76–78; Wolff (1856; repr. 1962), 68–90; Lane Fox (1986), 182.

Some scholars have argued for the Delphic origin of some oracles utilised by Porphyry.[94] In their collection of Delphic oracular responses, Parke and Wormell have attributed 338F, an Apollonian oracle, to Delphi. This oracle seems to have been given to the Athenians, given that the first line reads 'Offspring of Erichthonius' godlike race' (ὦ ζαθέης γαγαῶτες' Ερι χθονίοιο γενέθλης). Their attribution rests chiefly on the claim that the Athenians would be unlikely to consult any other oracular sanctuary.[95] They have also argued for the attribution of the second oracle cited in 322F to Delphi, an Apollonian oracle given to the Nicaeans which recommends sacrifices in order to remedy prophetic silence.[96] Others, however, have argued that this oracle originated from Claros, given that there is evidence that the inhabitants of Nicaea went to the Clarian sanctuary in the course of the second and third centuries A.D.[97]

Certain oracles within Porphyry's work may have been obtained by means of private divinatory rituals, as prophecies which emanated from individual prophets; some of these oracles are likely to be a product of theurgic ritual.[98] A related and vexed question is whether Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* contains oracles extracted from the *Chaldean Oracles*. Hans Lewy argued that various fragments of Porphyry's work (as well as a set of oracles which survive in the *Tübingen Theosophy*, which Lewy thinks has been extracted in any case from the *Philosophy from Oracles*, thus reducing both sources to one work) ultimately derive from the *Chaldean Oracles*.[99] Yet this attribution may well be problematic since no ancient authority (and none of the later Neoplatonists) cites Porphyry's oracles as 'Chaldean'.[100] Furthermore, several lines of an oracle (from *Tübingen Theosophy* no. 13) which Lewy claimed was of Chaldean origin, despite it being attributed by Lactantius to the Oracle of Apollo at Claros, have been discovered

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[94] Cf. especially Levin (1989), 1615–1620.

[95] Parke and Wormell (1956b), 190–191, no. 470; Fontenrose (1978), 351, no. 259, includes this oracle among his Delphic catalogue of 'Quasi-Historical Responses' but asserts that it is not genuine.

[96] Parke and Wormell (1956a), 287–288; (1956b), 194, no. 475.

[97] Robinson (1981), 341–342; Busine (2005), 254, n. 82. List of a delegation from Nicaea engraved at Claros: Robert (1954), 545.

[98] Wolff (1856; repr. 1962), 102; Bidez (1913; repr. 1964), 19, n. 1; Dodds (1951), 287; Myers (1913), 436–441; Busine (2005), 255; Johnson (2009), 106. Oracles produced via theurgic ritual: Goulet (1982), 380–388.

[99] Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 8–65. Some of the fragments of *Phil. Orac.* which Lewy attributed to the *Chaldean Oracles* are included in Majercik's edition (following Kroll and Des Places) as 'doubtful fragments': F219; F220; F221; F222; F223; F224; F225 (although Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 51, n. 162, argues that F224 is non-Chaldean because the instructions concerning the consecration of Hekate's statue contradict descriptions of Hekate's statue gleaned from the undoubted fragments).

[100] Dodds (1961), 267.

engraved on an altar cut into the city wall of Oenoanda, thus decisively disproving its presumed Chaldean origin.[101] Yet this one case does not necessarily entail that *none* of the oracles contained in the *Philosophy from Oracles* is of Chaldean origin.[102] The presence of Hekate as the deity who utters many of the oracles in Porphyry's work is certainly suggestive of a Chaldean provenance for at least some of the oracles.[103] Overall, it is clear that Porphyry utilised certain oracles originating from the Oracle at Didyma and probably also used oracles from Delphi and Claros. It is most probable that he also utilised oracles obtained through theurgic ritual, some of which were probably extracted from the *Chaldean Oracles*.

The extant fragments of the *Philosophy from Oracles* refer to three books.[104] In the first modern edition of the fragments, Gustav Wolff reconstructed the work as three books concerned with gods and their cult (from 316F, not explicitly attributed to Book 1); *daimones*, astrology and fate; and Christ in relation to heroes.[105] The two recent editions of the fragments of Porphyry have retained Wolff's structure, while slightly modifying the order of some fragments.[106] However, this reconstruction is arbitrary and it remains problematic to reconstruct the original structure and plan of the work from the few extant fragments.[107]

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[101] *Tübingen Theosophy* no. 13 in Buresch (1889), 97; Picard (1922a), 715; Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 17–21, argued that this oracle is extracted from *Phil. Orac.*, as well as from the *Chaldean Oracles*; Dodds (1961), 266–267. The epigraphical evidence for this oracle on the city walls of Oenoanda: Robert (1971), 597–619; Lane Fox (1986), 168–177; 190–191; 197–198.

[102] The view that *Phil. Orac*. does contain Chaldean material: Athanassiadi (2005), 120 *contra* Van Liefferinge (1999), 177–186.

[103] Dodds (1961), 267, notes that it seems odd that an oracle-hunter as learned and diligent as Porphyry should have missed a collection which had been in circulation for at least seventy years, although he advises keeping the three groups of oracles – theosophical, Porphyrian and Chaldean – separate.

[104] Book 1: Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 323F = *PE* 9.10.2; Book 2: 325F = *Theosophy* I.24; Philoponus, *De Opificio Mundi* 4.20; Book 3: 341aF = *De Opificio Mundi* 201.1; 345F = Eusebius, *DE* 3.6.39.

[105] Wolff (1856; repr. 1962), 38–43.

[106] Smith (1993a), 351–407; Girgenti and Muscolino (2011), 88–278. Cf. also Muscolino (2013), 217–283, which adds *Testimonia* and *Fragmenta* absent from previous editions. With the exception of a few excellent studies, Porphyry's *Phil. Orac.* has long been overlooked by scholars: Busine (2005); Kofsky (2002); Wilken (1979), 117–134; Edwards (2006); Smith (1997), 29–35; Athanassiadi (1989–90), 271–278; (1992), 45–62; (1993), 115–130; Johnson (2009), 103–115; Muscolino (2011), cxxi–ccxi. Porphyrian oracles of Hekate: Culdaut (1992), 271–289.

[107] Busine (2005), 230–240. Cf. Muscolino (2013), 205–216, who proposes a new division of the work into *Testimonia*, *Fragmenta* and *Dubia*, arranged according to chronological order.

Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* has always been a controversial work: possibly banned by the Christians in the fourth century A.D., it has recently been the subject of scholarly debate, particularly regarding its dating, content, historical context and relationship to other Porphyrian works.[108] These debates have often overshadowed the issue of what the extant fragments can reveal about Porphyry's philosophical and religious views.

Any examination of the fragments of Porphyry's work must demonstrate an awareness of the methodological problems involved in assessing fragments.[109] Insufficient attention has been given to Eusebius' and Augustine's agendas in quoting Porphyrian fragments. This book attempts to reassess this issue, by attempting to read the Porphyrian fragments contained in the work of Eusebius critically and with an awareness of the Christian debates and agenda implicitly propagated by both Eusebius and Augustine. As well as contextualising the parameters of Eusebius' polemical agenda and demonology, the methodologies of Porphyry and Eusebius are examined comparatively in Chapter 3.

Date of Composition of Philosophy from Oracles *and Porphyry's Intellectual Development*

The date of composition of Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* is a much-debated issue which has been linked with wider issues relating to Porphyry's intellectual development and his attitude towards traditional religion. Bidez, in his influential biography of Porphyry, argued that Porphyry's intellectual development followed a simple, linear chronological progression from youthful superstition to a more critical and 'rational' outlook during and after his time in Plotinus' school, when he became sceptical of religious practices.[110] Consequently, Bidez postulated that the *Philosophy from Oracles* was a product of Porphyry's 'credulous' youth, a work filled with 'oriental' superstition, basing this view partly on his interpretation of an uncertain and ambiguous passage from Eunapius.[111] This chronological approach towards Porphyry's intellectual development has profoundly affected the dating of his works and scholarly perspectives on their nature and scope, with the *Letter to Anebo* and *De regressu animae* often placed late and interpreted as extremely critical of and negative towards religion.[112] However, the dating criteria for these works is lacking and this schema of Porphyry's intellectual development is now

[108] Cf. Chapter 3, p. 85, n. 5.

[109] Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 91–95; Magny (2011), 6–7; 39–59; on the methodology of interpreting fragments, especially in relation to Porphyrian works.

[110] Bidez (1913; repr. 1964), 14–16; followed by Dodds (1951), 287; Parke (1985), 205.

[111] Eunapius, *VS* 457. Cf. Bidez (1913; repr. 1964), 16; Wolff (1856; repr. 1962), 38; Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 449.

[112] Cf. Smith (2010), 326–327, for a comprehensive summary.

recognised by most scholars as far too simplistic, with some even doubting the possibility of reconstructing his development at all.[113]

Indeed, Bidez' approach towards Porphyry's intellectual development and attitude towards religion is invalid for many reasons. Firstly, this approach fails to take sufficient account of Porphyry's literary style and methodology (which add to the problems with dating Porphyrian works and attempting to reconstruct his development), for in most extant works he exhibits an open-minded approach with a marked tendency to ask questions, to quote other writers verbatim and at length and to give divergent perspectives from various authorities.[114] Secondly, although the (apparent) absence of overt Neoplatonism in the *Philosophy from Oracles* (one of Bidez' justifications for dating this work to Porphyry's pre-Plotinian period) may seem unusual for a follower of Plotinus, Porphyry's *Letter to Marcella* demonstrates that he respected traditional worship throughout his life.[115] Thirdly, the ancient evidence used by Bidez is extremely ambiguous and weak: Eunapius' remark that Porphyry wrote about a special oracle 'but perhaps as seems likely he wrote this while he was still young' (νέος δὲ ὢν ἴσως ταῦτα ἔγραφεν, ὡς ἔοικεν) is unhelpful in dating the *Philosophy from Oracles*: since Porphyry discussed oracles in other books (for example, in *On the Works of Julian the Chaldean* [Εἰς τὰ Ἰουλιανοῦ τοῦ Χαλδαίου] and *History of Philosophy* [Φιλόσοφος ἱστορία]), Eunapius may not be referring to the *Philosophy from Oracles* here; yet even if he were, he himself seems very uncertain of the date.[116] Furthermore, less than twenty lines after this comment Eunapius discusses Porphyry's attitude towards divination and theurgy in positive terms.[117] Three ancient references to Porphyry's 'change of mind' or 'vacillation' are often adduced

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[113] Fowden (1981), 179–180; Smith (1987), 717; 773; 733; (1997), 29–35; (2010), 326–327; Lloyd (1967), 285; Muscolino (2011), cxiv–cxxvi, criticises the evolutionary nature of this chronological schema. Sodano (1958), xxxii–xxxvi, asserts that Bidez' chronology needs fundamental revision and there are no reasonable grounds to date *Phil. Orac.* to Porphyry's youth, but also argues that Porphyry's religious development can be traced through a chronology of his works. Clark (2000a), 5–6, suggests it is not possible to deduce either Porphyry's philosophical or religious development from his works because he usually has a specific rhetorical purpose and recycles material.

[114] Cf. Chapter 3, p. 93, n. 54; Smith (2007), 9–13.

[115] Porphyry, *Marc.* 18.14–16; 19.4–7 (see Chapter 4, n. 40 for full citations). Cf. Digeser (1998), 135; Wilken (1979), 131–132; O'Meara (1969), 7–8; Smith (2010), 345–348. Although see the reservations of Clark (2007), 139–140.

[116] Cf. Wilken (1979), 131–133; Fowden (1981), 180; Digeser (1998), 135; Muscolino (2011), cxxiv–cxxv; O'Meara (1959), 33–34, argues that Bidez' interpretation of Eunapius' passage is incorrect, and that Eunapius' account contains more evidence that *Phil. Orac.* was written after Porphyry's return from Sicily (A.D. 268) rather than before he met Plotinus or any earlier period.

[117] Eunapius, *VS* 457. Cf. Chapter 5, p. 181.

in support of Bidez' schema of Porphyry's development, yet only two references relate to Porphyry's attitude towards religion: Eunapius' comment that Porphyry changed his opinions as he grew older is couched in vague and uncertain terms, while Augustine's testimony that Porphyry had certain reservations about theurgy is somewhat suspect and will be considered in Chapters 4 and 5.[118]

On the contrary, there is firm evidence that Porphyry had a positive attitude towards religion and used oracles even in works written in old age after Plotinus had died: the only work of Porphyry which can be dated with certainty (to A.D. 301), the *Life of Plotinus*, culminates in a long oracle about the fate of Plotinus' soul.[119] Furthermore, Bidez' interpretation is influenced by the modern assessment of Porphyry's originality: Garth Fowden has shown that the fascination exercised by the rational mysticism of Plotinus on scholars has often carried along with it a lack of understanding of the originality of Porphyry's philosophical thought. In certain cases, the influence of Plotinus on his disciple has been overestimated.[120] Finally, Andrew Smith argues convincingly that Bidez' interpretation of Porphyry's intellectual development is built on flimsy chronological evidence as well as a biased and misguided view of the nature of religious experience in Late Antiquity.[121] Bidez' interpretation implicitly equates religious ritual and divination with 'superstition' and relies on a dichotomy between rationality and ritual which assumes the inherent irrationality of ritual, implying that rational, philosophical cognition and religious ritual are mutually exclusive.[122] However, the episodes discussed above which Porphyry recounts in his *Life of Plotinus* point in the opposite direction, suggesting that even during his time with Plotinus (and certainly in his old age), Porphyry saw religious, mystical and poetic ways to truth as complementary with philosophical investigation (and discursive rationality), mutually inclusive rather than exclusive.[123]

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[118] Eunapius, *VS* 457; Augustine, *City of God* 10.9; Iamblichus (*apud* Stob. 1.365.17–19) attributes confusion of soul and intellect to Porphyry (these citations represent the totality of ancient references to Porphyry's apparent 'vacillation'). Smith (2010), 327, notes that hostility and even misunderstanding of ancient witnesses may have led to a misrepresentation which characterised Porphyry as vacillating.

[119] Porphyry, *Plot.* 22. For the dating of this work to A.D. 301 cf. *Plot.* 23.13. Smith (2010), 327, n. 6, notes that the following works can be placed after Porphyry's arrival with Plotinus in 263: the Plotinus editions and commentaries, *De abstinentia* and *On What is in our Power* (dedicated respectively to Castricius and Chrysaorius from Plotinus' circle). The *Isagoge* and shorter commentary on the Categories were composed in Sicily and therefore after 268. The *Letter to Marcella* belongs to the latter part of his life (cf. *Marc*. 273.13 Nauck).

[120] Fowden (1981), 178; Busine (2005), 235–238; Smith (2010), 325–327.

[121] Smith (1987), 731; (1997), 29–35.

[122] Cf. Chapter 5, pp. 183–189.

[123] Porphyry, *Plot*. 15.2–6; 23.18–21. Cf. pp. 15–16 above.

To summarise, Bidez' interpretation of Porphyry's intellectual development and attitude towards religion, as well as the dating of the *Philosophy from Oracles* to Porphyry's youth, has been discredited and can be discounted. There is no certain evidence, internal or external, for dating this work to any particular period of Porphyry's life, although recent scholarly arguments for dating the work to near the end of Porphyry's life (approximately A.D. 303), based on the notion that the work was written as a tool to be used in Diocletian's Persecution of the Christians, are more convincing than Bidez' schema.[124] In a broader sense, Porphyry seems to have held a positive attitude and a continuous commitment towards traditional religion: although the fragmentary nature of Porphyrian works on religion make it difficult to discern his views with certainty, this book will attempt to re-evaluate Porphyry along these lines.[125] In particular, I argue that the *Philosophy from Oracles* is compatible with theurgy and expresses some key theurgic notions.[126] Furthermore, I attempt to reassess the nature of Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* as a work of philosophical inquiry drawing on two traditional philosophical genres, that of Problems and Solutions and that of Platonic dialogue, for educational and protreptic purposes, rather than as a sceptical attack on religious practices.[127]

Divination and Theurgy

What is Theurgy?

Theurgy remains notoriously difficult to define, partly because ancient philosophers conceived of theurgy as *a way of life* or, strictly speaking, as *a way of being*, as well as a nexus of ritual practices.[128] Theurgy was conceived as infinitely subtle and mysterious, a phenomenon which had to be experienced rather than just talked about: for this reason, theurgy is often defined by separating

[124] Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 89–91; Wilken (1979), 130–134; (1984), 134–137; Beatrice (1989), 258–261; Simmons (1995), 22–25; 77–78; Digeser (1998), 129–146; (2000), 91–107; 161–163. Muscolino (2013), 74–86, argues that *Phil. Orac.* was written in Rome during A.D. 273–275. O'Meara (1959), 7–49, has argued for the identification of *Phil. Orac.* with *De regressu animae* and thus attempts to date this work to a late period of Porphyry's life; Hadot (1960), 205–244, has challenged this thesis.

[125] Smith (2010), 326–327, notes that recent scholarship has emphasised Porphyry's intellectually inquisitive nature and continuous commitment towards traditional religion.

[126] Cf. Chapters 2 and 3.

[127] Cf. Chapter 4.

[128] Athanassiadi (1993), 116, emphasises that theurgy is not just a technique but a dynamic state of mind.

it from theology (that is, speaking about the gods).[129] Through his concept of 'receptivity' (ἐπιτηδειότης) and his emphasis on the ethical cultivation of the virtues, Iamblichus implicitly centralises the idea that theurgy is a *lifelong endeavour* on the part of the theurgist.[130] Recently, scholars have begun to notice the extraordinary parallels between theurgy and Tantric and Tibetan forms of Buddhism, as well as other Eastern religious traditions.[131] These parallels further support the notion of theurgy as a lifelong endeavour, comparable with the lifelong practices of meditation, ritual and religious devotion undertaken by adherents of Eastern traditions.

Another reason for the modern difficulty in defining theurgy stems from the fact that it is based on an unfamiliar cosmology, largely divergent from modern, Western cosmological worldviews. Even in Late Antiquity, though, the nature of theurgy was somewhat controversial and different sources give us different views of its scope and value.[132] This account of theurgy is primarily based on the evidence of Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*, with some input from Proclus' writings and the fragments of the *Chaldean Oracles*. As a working definition, theurgy (θεουργία) designates a lifelong endeavour incorporating a set of ritual practices alongside the development of ethical and intellectual capacities, which aimed to use symbols (σύμβολα) to reawaken the soul's pre-ontological, causal connection with the gods, operating primarily through divine love (θεία φιλία) and, subordinately, through cosmic sympathy (συμπάθεια). The goal of theurgy was the cumulative contact, assimilation and, ultimately, union with the divine and thereby the divinisation of the theurgist; in other words, the ascent of the soul to the divine, intelligible realm (ἀναγωγή) and the manifestation of the divine in embodied life. This ascent to the divine is conceptualised as an ascent of consciousness. Iamblichus maintains that the highest purpose of theurgy is ascent to the One, which was thought to be beyond Being itself; yet this occurs only at a very late stage and to a few individuals.[133]

Theurgy included divination as one of its most central elements, as emphasised in Proclus' definition of theurgy as a power 'greater than all human wisdom and knowledge, embracing the blessings of divination, the purifying powers of initiation, and in a word all the operations of divine possession' (ἡ κρείττων ἐστὶν ἁπάσης ἀνθρωπίνης σωφροσύνης καὶ ἐπιστήμης, συλλαβοῦσα τά τε τῆς μαντικῆς ἀγαθὰ καὶ τὰς τῆς τελεσιουργικῆς καθαρτικὰς

[129] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.2 (6.6–7; 7.3–5), emphasises the ultimate role of experience in understanding theurgy. Cf. also Janowitz (2002), 18.

[130] See pp. 26–28 below.

[131] Cf. Shaw (1995); Dillon (2002), 290–294; (2010), 367.

[132] Shaw (1985), 2–3; Johnston (1990), 76.

[133] Iamblichus, *DM* 5.22 (230.12–231.2).

δυνάμεις καὶ πάντα ἁπλῶς τὰ τῆς ἐνθέου κατακωχῆς ἐνεργήματα).[134] Theurgic ritual involved invoking the epiphany of a deity, either within the soul of a human or as an external vision (considered to occur both in dream divination or while awake): for example, epiphanies of Hekate are attested in the *Chaldean Oracles* and in Marinus' *Life of Proclus*.[135] The invocation of a deity was often, if not always, for divinatory purposes. Theurgic ritual also involved the construction and animation of telestic statues which were thought to become animated by the deity and bestow oracles during the course of the ritual (τελεστική).[136] As we will see, theurgic ritual also involved oracular divination whereby the theurgist was considered to become divinely inspired or possessed and to consequently utter oracles from the gods. Prayer and sacrifice were also important practices for the theurgist.[137]

Receptivity

The central purpose of theurgy is divinisation, the assimilation and ascent of the human to the divine, intelligible realm and the manifestation of this ascent and the divine vision produced by it, in the form of divination.[138] The principle underlying the ritual means of assimilation with and ascent to the divine (ἀναγωγή) was 'like attracts like' (a principle based on the concepts of 'divine love' and 'sympathy', discussed below).[139] Thus, the theurgist had to make his or her soul as similar as possible to the upper, divine realms, by assimilating himself or herself to the purity and eternal nature of the gods:

> Κοινὰ μὲν οὖν ταῦθ' ἡμῖν ἔστω παραμύθια περὶ τῆς ἀχράντου θρησκείας ὡς τά τ' ἄλλα οἰκείως συναρμοζομένης τοῖς κρείττοσιν ἡμῶν, καὶ διότι καθαρὰ πρὸς καθαροὺς καὶ ἀπαθὴς πρὸς ἀπαθεῖς προσάγεται·

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[134] Proclus, *Plat. Theol.* 1.25.7-10 (Saffrey and Westerink, p. 113), trs. Dodds (1951), 291, with slight emendations.

[135] Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 2; Marinus, *Proc.* 28. Epiphanies of Hekate in the *Chaldean Oracles*: Johnston (1990), 111–133. Cf. also Porphyry, *Phil. Orac*. 317F.

[136] Cf. Chapter 7, pp. 252–255; Iamblichus, *DM* 5.23 (233.9–13); Eunapius, *VS* 457; Dodds (1951), 291–295; Lewy (1956; repr: 1978), 495–496: Excursus X; Johnston (1990), 87–88; 131–132.

[137] Prayer: Iamblichus, *DM* 5.26; Sacrifice: *DM* 5; 6.1–2.

[138] *DM* 1.12 (42.11–13); 2.6 (81.9–11); 2.7 (114.8–10); 3.18 (145.10–13); 3.25 (159.3); 3.31 (179.4–8); 5.26 (238.12–240.8); 8.8 (271.9–13; 272.7–9); 10.4 (289.3–5; 290.10–292.3); 10.6 (292.7–14).

[139] *DM* 5.20 (227.13–228.2).

> Let this, then, be our general explanation of the unsullied mode of divine worship: it confers upon all other beings an intimate attachment to the classes superior to us, because in fact the pure is brought to the pure and the impassive to the impassive.[140]

Thus, intellectual (that is, noetic) purification through philosophy together with moral virtue were considered to be *essential* prerequisites and practices for theurgic ritual: Iamblichus maintains that the theurgist *had* to be a philosopher.[141] This helps to explain the way in which theurgy was considered as a way of life as well as a nexus of ritual practices.[142] Furthermore, theurgy was envisaged as encompassing meditation and contemplative exercises as well as traditional religious practices such as divination and prayer. The ritual, intellectual and ethical qualities which were considered to be essential for the theurgist to develop are described using the term ἐπιτηδειότης, meaning 'receptivity', 'fitness' or 'suitability'. Iamblichus' notion of the 'receptivity' (ἐπιτηδειότης) of the theurgist therefore forms a cornerstone of theurgy.[143] Four semantic domains of the term ἐπιτηδειότης seem to have influenced Iamblichus' formation of ritual receptivity: potential, sympathy, receptivity and aptitude.[144] Iamblichus maintains that the theurgist had to purify him or herself through ritual, intellectual and ethical means in order to receive divine messages through divination. He repeatedly emphasises that divine illumination is omnipresent in the mortal world, yet the ritual practitioner's receptivity must have been properly cultivated so that they are ready to receive these divine illuminations.[145] Thus, receptivity was not conceived as a static or

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[140] *DM* 1.11 (38.8–10), trs. Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell (2003), with emendations.

[141] *DM* 2.11 (98.6–10), discussed below; 3.13 (131.4–132.2); 5.20 (228.5–10). The essential prerequisite of the study of philosophy both prior to and in tandem with theurgy and the extensive philosophical training in Iamblichus' school: Dillon (1973; repr. 2009), 14–17; (1987), 868–869; Johnston (1990), 87; Shaw (1995), 85; (1998), 229; Watts (2006), 80; 87–89; Addey (2007a), 38–40. The extensive philosophical training preceding theurgy in Proclus' case: Marinus, *Proc.* 13; 18–19. Contemplation and a spiritual turning towards the gods as essential to theurgy in the *Chaldean Oracles*: F1; F2; F110; F112; F116; F163.

[142] For this reason, Athanassiadi (1993), 116, defines theurgy as 'the often involuntary manifestation of an inner state of sanctity deriving from a combination of goodness and knowledge in which the former element prevails.' Marx-Wolf (2010), 485, n. 16, criticises this definition for focusing on the effects of theurgy rather than defining it as a set of practices; this is unfair, given that the development of ethical and intellectual capacities were considered to be a vital prerequisite and adjunct to theurgy, as well as marking its perceived effects.

[143] Cf. George (2005), 287–303; Addey (2013b), 7–24.

[144] Dodds (1933; repr. 1963), 344–345; George (2005), 290–293.

[145] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.8 (29.1–3); 3.11 (125.4–6); 3.12 (129.9–11); 8.7 (270.6–14); *VP* 16.68–6; 17.71–74; 18.80–83; 20.94–95; 19.90. Cf. George (2005), 293; Addey (2013b), 14–22.

permanent state but as a dynamic state construed as a kind of instrumental power or agency for the human, since it was seen as the active cultivation of aptitudes which enable contact with the divine.[146] The notion of receptivity also has to be considered in relation to (1) the theory of recollection and (2) the doctrine of rebirth or reincarnation.[147] This helps to explain why theurgy was envisaged as a lifelong endeavour (in fact, as a multi-lifelong endeavour which the human soul undertakes over the course of many incarnations), as well as a set of ritual practices.

The Cosmology of Theurgy

The Connected Cosmos

To understand these ideas further, one must consider the philosophical and cosmological worldview which lies at the foundation of theurgy. Firstly, in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*, a central foundation of theurgy is the idea that the gods are both transcendent (in an ontological and causal sense) and immanent throughout the cosmos (including the physical world) *simultaneously*: while this notion is paradoxical, it is crucial for understanding theurgy. Within theurgy, the gods were considered to work *through* souls and *through* nature.[148] Iamblichus explains the workings of theurgy using the principles of divine love (θεία φιλία), cosmic sympathy (συμπάθεια) and symbols (σύμβολα). The theurgic worldview is based on the idea of an animated cosmos, encompassing the idea that everything in the cosmos is connected within the framework of a metaphysical, hierarchical schema. Iamblichus' system of theurgy is based upon Plato's taxonomy of the cosmos, which reflects 'the cosmological conviction that the meaning of life is rooted in an encompassing cosmic order in which man, society and the gods all participate', which exemplifies what Jonathan Z. Smith has termed a 'locative' view of the cosmos.[149] This 'locative' worldview, a predominant feature of ancient Mediterranean religions, is based on five key principles: (1) there is a cosmic order that permeates every level of reality; (2) this cosmic order is the divine society of the gods; (3) the structure and dynamics of this society can be discerned in the movements and patterned juxtapositions of the heavenly bodies; (4) human

[146] Proclus, *In Alc.* 92.3–8; Marinus, *Proc.* 5; Addey (2013b), 7–24 drawing on Keller (2002).

[147] See Addey (2014), 68–69; Iamblichus, *DM* 4.4 (186.9–187.1); 4.5 (187.2–10); *VP* 14.63. Porphyry's acceptance of reincarnation: Smith (2010), 341. Cf. also *DM* 8.8 (272.4–9); Proclus, *In Alc.* 237.7–13.

[148] For this reason, it seems better to avoid the term 'miracle' (which may contain Christian connotations of the divine working outside of or beyond the realm of nature) in definitions of theurgy: see, for example, Clarke's defintion of theurgy: (2003), xxvii.

[149] Loew (1967), 5; 13; J.Z. Smith (1978), 132; Shaw (1995), 9–10.

society should be a microcosm of the divine society; and (5) the chief responsibility of priests is to attune human order to the divine order.[150]

Divine Love, Sympathy and Friendship in Theurgy: Alignment and Right Relationship

The process by which the cosmic, divine order permeates every lower level of reality can be described as sympathy (συμπάθεια). However, according to Iamblichus, theurgy is ultimately dependent upon divine friendship or love (θεία φιλία), which actually causes cosmic sympathy to arise.[151] Thus, the effective operation of theurgy is attributed primarily to divine love and only secondarily (and subordinately) to sympathy. It has been noted that theurgy is 'a means of organising the natural *sympatheia* of the world to concord with the benevolent providence of the gods. In this sense it can be viewed as a sort of theologized science'.[152] The theurgist seeks to develop right relationship and alignment with the gods by using symbols in an efficacious manner. Iamblichus considered the community of the gods as an ineffable and supracosmic process which enabled sympathy to arise: 'one single bond of friendship, embracing the totality of beings, effecting this bond through an ineffable process of communion' (φιλίας τε μιᾶς, τῆς τὰ πάντα συνεχούσης, τὸν σύνδεσμον τοῦτον διά τινος ἀρρήτου κοινωνίας ἀπεργαζομένης).[153] Thus divine love (θεία φιλία) is 'supracosmic sympathy': it enables the phenomenon of sympathy to arise.[154] This principle is crucial for understanding Iamblichus' conception of theurgy: it lies at the root of the idea of a connected divine and human community and the notion of a 'line of unbroken continuity' extending throughout the entire cosmos, notions which account for Iamblichus' claim that *all* traditional cult is theurgic.[155] In this holistic view of the cosmos, human friendship (φιλία) and 'sympathy for

[150] Loew (1967), 5; 13; J.Z. Smith (1978), 132.

[151] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.12 (41.4–11; 42.5–7); 2.11 (97.13–15); 3.19 (146.12–15); 4.2 (184.1–10); 4.3 (184.14–185.3); 4.9 (192.14–193.1); 5.5 (206.8–10); 5.7–8; 5.9 (209.9–14); 5.21 (228.11–13); 5.25 (237.1–5); 5.26 (240.9–14); 8.4 (266.8–267.10); 10.5 (291.10–292.3); 10.6 (292.4–14). Cf. Proclus, *ET* propositions 121 and 122; Van Liefferinge (1999), 59–70; Van den Berg (2001), 72; Struck (2004), 212; Chlup (2012), 170–172. It must be noted that Iamblichus does not reject sympathy (as Janowitz [2002], 11, claims) but subordinates its importance and causal power to the role of divine love.

[152] Dillon (2010), 374. Cf. Addey (2012), 133–150.

[153] Iamblichus, *DM* 5.10 (211.12–14).

[154] I owe the phrase 'supracosmic sympathy' to Clarke (2003), 239, n. 299. Cf. *DM* 5.9 (209.9–14).

[155] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.9 (31.9–32.6); 5.10 (211.12–14); 5.20 (227.1–10); 5.21 (228.11–229.6; 229.10–230.11); 5.24 (235.7–11); 5.26 (240.9–14). Cf. O'Meara (2003), 77; 123–128.

one's fellow human beings' (φίλανθρωπία) are expressions and manifestations of divine love and providence; thus, friendship, love and care for humanity are crucial for the theurgist.[156] Interestingly, the concepts of divine love and sympathy are used by Iamblichus to differentiate firmly between theurgy and fraudulent, antagonistic and potentially harmful 'magical' practices (those described under the rubric γοητεία), as discussed below.

Cosmic sympathy is based on the idea that certain chains of noetic 'Forms' and symbols (σύμβολα) emanate from the gods through all subsequent ontological grades of reality, permeating every strand of the cosmos, including the physical world.[157] Thus the notion of sympathy encompasses the idea that truth is expressed in different levels of reality in the way most appropriate to that level.[158] This notion is ultimately based on the idea of Platonic Forms which, literally, 'inform' all physical phenomena. Theurgic ritual and, by implication, the notion of sympathy as a significant component of theurgy, are dependent on the Platonic theory of Recollection (as originally expressed in Plato's *Meno*), by which all human beings have prior knowledge of the Forms, and so can perceive them by observing physical phenomena which are inherently 'imprinted' with these Forms; humans thus use objects in the material world as 'memory prods' to remind the soul of the Forms.[159] Theurgists used the symbols (σύμβολα), considered to be physical and verbal expressions of the divine 'chains' (σειρά or τάξις), in order to attain contact with the gods by connecting the symbols with their divine causes.[160] By using symbols in this way, theurgy invokes the sympathetic connections between all grades of reality in a way that allows access to the causes of the connections – the gods.

Symbols and Tokens in Theurgic Ritual

Within theurgy, a symbol (σύμβολον) is a direct, efficacious and ineffable link with divine truth, operating on the level of a talisman.[161] Crucially, symbols in a theurgic context were considered to bear *an ontological link* with the thing they symbolised: this encapsulates a vital difference from the modern sense of the

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[156] Cf. Addey (2011b), 322; (2012) 148–167. Cf. also Chapter 4, pp. 142–143; Chapter 7, pp. 269–273.

[157] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.16 (138.1–5); 5.10 (210.11–211.1); Proclus, *ET* propositions 97; 123; 125 and 128.

[158] Cf. Proclus, *ET* proposition 103.

[159] Shaw (1995), 24.

[160] Cf. Proclus, *On the Sacred Art* 148.5; 148.11; 148.15–18; 150.1–4.

[161] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.21 (65.5–11); 2.11 (96.15–97.2); 7.1–2 (250.1–14). The development of the term σύμβολον from Classical Greece through to Late Antique theurgic practices: Struck (2004), especially 204 (the etymology of the term 'talisman' and its usefulness for describing Neoplatonic notions of 'symbol'); Faraone (1992), 3–4.

term, which usually designates a solely metaphorical representation of the thing symbolised. Symbols are the main elements of theurgic ritual (within this context, the term σύμβολα is used interchangeably with συνθήματα, literally 'tokens'). A symbol could be a physical object such as a plant, gem, bone, stone, herb or type of incense or another material object, linked with a specific deity through divine love and sympathy; it could also be a verbal utterance, a musical composition, a ritual or a text.[162] One type of verbal utterance considered to be a symbol within a theurgic context were the 'unknowable, ineffable names', which are strange, non-Greek words with no obvious meaning that were written down (θέσις) or uttered (ἐκφώνησις) within ritual contexts, as well as being inscribed upon cult statues and other ritual paraphernalia.[163] Iamblichus maintains that these are the secret names of the gods and therefore operate on a supra-rational, divine level of reality; thus, they have been given to humans by the gods.[164]

Speaking of 'theurgic procedures' (δρᾶται ἐν ταῖς ἱερουργίαις), Iamblichus maintains that some of these rituals are 'as symbols consecrated from all eternity to the higher beings' (ὡς σύμβολα καθιέρωται ἐξ ἀιδίου τοῖς κρείττοσι·).[165] This comment is vitally important for this study, for it highlights the ways in which theurgic ritual could itself be perceived as a 'symbol', a crucial idea which points towards the roles of oracles and other forms of inspired divination as 'symbols'. According to Iamblichus, the symbols 'activate' the divine element of the human soul, since the theurgist, by means of the ineffable symbols, invests himself or herself with the hieratic role of the gods; the symbols were thought to 'spark' a kind of affinity with or recognition of their divine cause in the soul of the theurgist enabling ascent to the gods.[166] Symbols and tokens were mixed into the material of

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[162] *Chald. Or.* F108, trs. Majerjik (1989), describes the Paternal Intellect as sowing symbols throughout the cosmos; Iamblichus, *DM* 5.23 (233.9–13); Proclus, *On the Sacred Art*; Dodds (1951), 292–293; Sodano (1958), 52–53; Shaw (1995), 162–169; Struck (2004), 211, 218–224. Symbol as a verbal utterance: *DM* 1.12 (42.5–7); 4.2–3; Shaw (1995), 170–188; Struck (2004), 225–226; Addey (2007a), 35–57; (2011a), 279–294. Text as ritual in Proclus: Rappe (2000), 170–196.

[163] Proclus, *In Tim*. 2.247.25 (Diehl); *In Crat.* 31.27 (Romano); Porphyry *apud* Augustine, *City of God* 10.11; cf. Dodds (1951), 292–293; 305 n. 74. The use of 'unknowable names' (also called 'barbarian names' (ὀνόματα βάρβαρα) or *voces magicae*) in Late Antique ritual contexts: Sodano (1958) 52–54; Cox Miller (1986), 481–505; Graf (1991), 188–213; Frankfurter (1994), 189–221; Knipe (2009), 93–102; Addey (2011a), 279–294; (2012), 133–150.

[164] Iamblichus, *DM* 7.4 (254.11–255.11; 256.4–13); 7.5 (257.3–14); 1.15 (47.3–9; 48.4–8); 8.5 (267.11–268.3). Cf. also Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell (2003), 59, n. 86; Addey (2011a), 279–294.

[165] Iamblichus, *DM* I.11 (37.7–8), trs. Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell (2003), with slight emendations.

[166] Iamblichus, *DM* 4.2 (184.1–10); 6.6 (247.1–5); Cf. Shaw (1995), 50, 162.

telestic statues, inscribed on or placed within statues, worn by the theurgist, spoken by him or her or otherwise handled during theurgic rituals.[167]

The Relationship between Theurgy, Magic and Religious Practices

It seems important to examine the precise relationship between theurgy, magic and traditional religious practices. Scholars have repeatedly attempted to define the relationship between 'magic' and 'religion' with no satisfactory result or consensus.[168] This vexed relationship and lack of consensus also affects theurgy: it is difficult to define theurgy's precise relationship to either magic or religion when the relationship between the latter two phenomena remains obscure. Furthermore, 'magic' is a contested term which has been the subject of extensive scholarly debate: the general consensus seems to be the impossibility of agreeing on a definition of 'magic' which is universally applicable across all cultures and times.[169] However, we can compare theurgy with γοητεία, the Greek term used to describe a range of practices, such as making curses and amulets, using drugs and potions (φάρμακα) and raising the dead, commonly associated with notions of 'magic' and sorcery. Traditionally, scholars have disputed the claim that there was any kind of substantial difference between theurgy and γοητεία.[170] Yet the rituals associated with theurgy were for the most part quite old and seem to be derived from religious tradition rather than from 'magical' techniques. Thus, oracles, prayer and sacrifice (traditional Greek, Near Eastern and Egyptian religious practices), as well as the use of statues for divination (the prevalent form of divination in traditional Egyptian religion), were important elements of theurgy.[171]

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[167] Dodds (1951), 292–293; Sodano (1958), 52; Johnston (1990), 87.

[168] The bibliography here is vast: cf. Neusner, Frerichs and Flesher (1989). The problem of defining 'magic' and its relationship with 'religion': Malinowski (1954); Geertz and Thomas (1975), 71–109; Hammond (1970), 1349–1356; Tambiah (1968), 175–208; Wax and Wax (1963), 495–513. Studies of 'magic' and 'religion' in relation to the Graeco-Roman context: Luck (1985), 3–9; 20–21; Versnel (1991a), 177–197; (1991b), 60–106; Gordon (1999), 159–275; Dickie (2001), 18–46; Várhelyi (2001), 13–31; Collins (2008), xi–xii; 1–26.

[169] Cf. p. 34, n. 179 below.

[170] Dodds (1951), 283; 291; 294; Luck (1985), 4; Dillon (2007), 40. Cf. also Janowitz (2002), 3–4; Athanassiadi's criticisms: (1993), 115–116.

[171] Cf. Janowitz (2002), 4. Divination by statues as the central form of divination in Egyptian religious tradition: Cerný (1962), 35–48; Frankfurter (1998), 145–197 (especially 145–148; 153–156); (2005), 233–251; Assmann (2001), 41; Uzdavinys (2009), 118–140; (2010), 84–87; 143–203, all of whom stress the continuity of using cult statues to give oracles in traditional barque processions from the Pharaonic period through to Late Antiquity. Frankfurter (2005), 236, emphasises the public, institutional nature of the use of divination by statues. The ferrying of the statue of Isis from Philae to the land of the Blemmyes at fixed

However, some elements of theurgy, such as the use of 'unknowable names', were 'magical' techniques.[172] Yet many such elements of theurgy considered by scholars to derive from magical praxis, such as the carrying and use of symbols, also play an important role in mystery cult rituals.[173] In fact, in using symbols, theurgists may have been influenced by magical techniques but would also have been influenced by: (1) the divinatory tradition, whereby the term 'symbol' had been used since the Archaic period to denote a divinatory omen or sign; (2) the Pythagorean tradition, where the word was used to describe Pythagorean aphorisms, which were often interpreted in an allegorical sense by later critics; and (3) the use of symbols as divine cultic epithets and as tokens allowing one access to extraordinary planes of reality (the afterlife; the realms of the gods or divine levels of wisdom) in mystery cults.[174]

Whilst modern scholars tend to dichotomise theurgy and traditional religious practices according to the public/private divide, some important aspects of ancient traditional religiosity are often overlooked, such as mystery cults (an optional, soteriological religious phenomenon) and especially domestic religion (comprising 'private' religious practice) which remain understudied, despite their ubiquitous nature in ancient culture and society.[175] Notions of 'initiation' associated by Neoplatonists with theurgy clearly derive from mystery cults, such as those of Eleusis, which were part of the traditional religious infrastructure of Greece and the wider Mediterranean world.[176] Oracles were closely linked with mystery cults in Antiquity and this study argues for the centrality of oracles in the initiation of the theurgist: in a philosophical and psychological sense, theurgy seems to have been considered to comprise *the paradigm of mystery cults*, underlying and mutually supportive of other mystery cults, in a traditionally

intervals for giving oracles is still attested in the mid-fifth century A.D.: cf. Priscus F27, ed. and trs. Blockley (1981–82), 2:322–323, cited in Frankfurter (1998), 155.

[172] Even here though, influence from mystery cults is possible: for example, the 'great' tablet from Thurii (used in Orphic or Dionysiac Mysteries) contains strings of 'meaningless' letters mixed in with invocations to various deities and bears great similarity to the *voces magicae*: cf. Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2008), 137–150; 263–265: L12 (F492).

[173] Symbols in mystery cults: Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal (2008), 266; 151–160: L13 (F493) and L13A (F493), two gold tablets from Pherai (both dated to the fourth or third century B.C.) which use the term σύμβολα; the first tablet actually includes the 'symbols' which appear to be divine cultic epithets used as passwords by initiates to enter the fields of the blessed in the afterlife. Cf. also Burkert (1987), 18; 46–47; 94–98; Struck (2004), 104–107.

[174] Cf. especially Struck (2004), 90–104; 165–201.

[175] Cf. J.Z. Smith (2003), 24, on domestic religion in Antiquity, the most widespread form of religious activity and yet the least studied, perhaps due to its oral transmission and small-scale artefacts.

[176] Cf. Luck (1985), 22.

polytheistic manner.[177] In a historical sense, mystery cults may well have acted as the paradigm for theurgy.[178]

The relationship between theurgy and 'magic' is complicated further by the fact that various terms in antiquity were used to denote the latter. As well as the largely pejorative γοητεία, the more neutral term μαγεία (and its Latin equivalent, *magia*) was also used to delineate 'magic', deriving from the term *magos*, originally the Persian word for 'priest' and thus used within a religious context.[179] However, from the sixth century B.C., this term was associated in Greek literature with beggars and wizards and gradually accrued progressively negative connotations.[180] In the Graeco-Roman world, this usage became standard to the extent that the terms γοητεία and μαγεία were often used interchangeably (often in a derogatory sense), although the latter term could sometimes be construed in a positive sense, as oriental wisdom; there is certainly a tendency within philosophical circles from the first century A.D. onwards to refer this term back to its original historical context and its association with Persian priests and religious experts.[181] Given Iamblichus' respect and admiration for traditional religious cults from the East, it may well be that the philosopher would have construed μαγεία as ancient ritual wisdom synonymous with theurgy, but he does not use the term in the *De Mysteriis* and may well have chosen to avoid it for polemical purposes, in order to counteract the Christian conflation of theurgy with 'magic'.

However, Iamblichus is adamant that there are substantial differences between theurgy and 'magic' in the sense of γοητεία – he firmly differentiates them according to several key criteria: (1) the way of life and receptivity of the ritual practitioner; (2) the use of symbols according to divine love and sympathy (the method of the theurgist) or according to sympathy only (the magician [γόης]) and the consequent metaphysical realms with which the symbols are connected; and (3) the extent to which the ritual practitioner sees his capacities to use ritual power as his own (the magician) or as a gift of the gods (the theurgist). These criteria were envisaged as connected, for Iamblichus certainly implies that the way in which the symbols are used and the attitude of the ritual practitioner are inextricably linked with their way of life and consequent receptivity. However, there is need for some caution: each criterion relates to practices undertaken by specific individuals and

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177 Cf. Burkert (1987), 3–4, on the polytheistic approach towards mystery cults. Cf. Chapter 7, p. 280 and n. 181, on Nestorius, an active theurgist and hierophant at Eleusis.

178 Cf. Chapter 2, pp. 50–57; Chapter 7, p. 280.

179 Cf. Luck (1985), 5–6; Graf (1997), 2–6; Dickie (2001), 14; Janowitz (2002), 1–3; Collins (2008), 54; Muscolino (2011), cxxviii.

180 Janowitz (2002), 1; Collins (2008), 54–55; 58–59.

181 The interchangeability of the terms γοητεία and μαγεία in Antiquity: Luck (1985), 21; Dickie (2001), 12–13; Janowitz (2002), 1–3; Collins (2008), 60–61. The tendency in philosophical circles to associate the term *magos* with Persian priests: Apuleius, *Apology* 25–43; Porphyry, *Abst*. 4.16.1.

the states of receptivity and consciousness attained by them; the differentiation is most often located specifically in individuals rather than in practices, the latter of which are therefore characterised by a certain permeability and fluidity. Indeed, Iamblichus only uses the term γοητεία twice in the *De Mysteriis*, usually preferring to discuss the practitioner rather than the practice.[182]

A key difference between theurgy and γοητεία is the way of life and the receptivity (ἐπιτηδειότης) of the ritual practitioner, for theurgy focused on an intellectual or spiritual turning upwards.[183] This distinction is evident in Iamblichus' response to Porphyry's question about ritual practitioners who stand on 'magical characters' (οἱ ἐπὶ χαρακτήρων στάντες): 'because of those who put it to bad use, it is not easy to do justice to this form of divination in a single account' (Τοῦτο...διὰ τοὺς κακῶς αὐτῷ χρωμένους οὐ ῥᾴδιον ἐν ἑνὶ λόγῳ περιλαβεῖν).[184] Iamblichus' allusion marks a clear reference to the magician (γόης), whose practices are contrasted with those of theurgy: the former employs falsehood and deceit, producing a certain motion of the soul which draws a phantom-like appearance likely to be disturbed by evil *daimones*; while theurgy connects its practitioners with the gods: this quality ensures that theurgic operations are inaccessible to and unobstructed by evil *daimones*, because the presence of divine illumination blocks anything of a contrary nature.[185] Indeed, Porphyry and Iamblichus agree in their definitions of the nature of 'magic' (γοητεία): Porphyry also maintains that the magician (γόης) attracts evil *daimones* through his or her impurity, impiety and lawlessness, drawing a contrast with divine men 'who are wise about the gods' and whose piety acts as a guard and protection in their quest for assimilation with the divine.[186] Iamblichus maintains that the magician (γόης) is inferior to the theurgist because of his or her lack of receptivity, engendered by a lack of sustained discipline, endurance and preparation: the magician overlooks 'the whole procedure of effective contemplation' (τὴν ὅλην πραγματείαν τῆς τελεσιουργοῦ θεωρίας) and disdains 'the order of sacred worship' (τάξιν ... τῆς θρησκείας), rejecting the ancestral customs, prayers and lengthy ritual practices (traditional cultic practices envisaged by Iamblichus as close to the divine because of their long-established history and ancestral nature)

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182 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.25 (160.12); 7.5 (258.5: citing Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo*).

183 This distinction has been described as the inner disposition or motivation of the ritual practitioner: Smith (1974), 99; Janowitz (2002), 10–11. Yet to characterise it as a way of life brings us closer to Iamblichus' differentiation, for he implies that the theurgist is involved in a lifelong cultivation of discipline and receptivity.

184 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.13 (129.14–15). 'Standing on characters': *PGM* III.292–303; VII.586; XIII.1003.

185 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.13 (129.15–130.14); 3.29 (172.8–173.6); 3.31 (176.3–178.12); 4.7 (190.14–191.3). Cf. Smith (1974), 92.

186 Porphyry, *Abst*. 2.41.5; 2.42.1; 2.45.1–3.

necessary to perform effective theurgic ritual.[187] It is the magician's lack of lifelong cultivation of receptivity which is condemned by Iamblichus rather than the divinatory practice of standing on characters *per se*, also utilised by the theurgists; yet, the magician believes that standing on characters for a mere hour is effective.[188] Thus, Iamblichus contrasts the magician's ephemeral acts with the longevity and endurance which characterise the theurgist's actions, with the latter seen as imitating the eternal and ontological nature of the gods, thus engendering affinity and receptivity to their presence. This contrast is based on the notion that 'like attracts like' for the magician's ephemeral procedures are ineffective in increasing receptivity and thus unsuitable to act as a receptacle for the gods. As well as being a philosopher, the theurgist had to purify their soul through the lifelong cultivation of his or her receptivity (through ritual, ethical and intellectual means) in order to attain divine assimilation and provide a pure receptacle for the gods, since theurgy was considered to operate through the will of the gods.[189] There is little here that Porphyry would disagree with: both *De abstinentia* and the *Letter to Marcella* are permeated with the conviction that ritual practices are ineffective unless they are performed alongside the cultivation of ethical qualities; both works demonstrate the necessity of ritual coupled with ethical and intellectual practice.[190]

Another major distinction between the theurgist and the magician was that the theurgist believed that the gods willingly endowed humans with theurgic capacities: this ranged from the ability to invoke the gods to knowledge of the correct symbols (σύμβολα) to use in specific rituals. This knowledge and range of abilities was thought to be given as a gift of the gods, often in divination rituals. This leads us to the final major distinction between theurgy and γοητεία: the way in which they utilise symbols within ritual. Iamblichus considered these symbols to be vertically connected to their divine causes: each token (σύνθημα) or symbol (σύμβολον) is vertically rooted in its causal power, yet each had a horizontal identity in its respective order in the cosmos.[191] The horizontal sympathy (συμπάθεια) that the soul shares with a symbol became the foundation through which its vertical (i.e. divine) power was received. However, any ritual that stopped at the horizontal level of sympathy and did not 'preserve the analogy with divine creation' was not

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[187] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.13 (131.4–132.2). We might compare the Tantric tradition and the hard work, endurance and discipline which it demands of its practitioners: for example, the *Shiva-Samhitâ* (3.16.18–19) (cited in Fueurstein (1998), 121) observes that: 'Success comes to a person of faith and self-confidence, but there is no success for others. Hence practice is hard.'

[188] *Contra* Athanassiadi (1993), 122.

[189] Iamblichus, *DM* 2.11 (98.6–10).

[190] Porphyry, *Abst*. 2.15–17.2; 2.35.1; 2.50; 2.60–61; *Marc*. 16; 22–23; Smith (1974), 104; 128

[191] Shaw (1995), 166–169; Chlup (2012), 170; 172.

theurgy but magic (γοητεία).[192] That is, any ritual practitioner who used the sympathy inherent in the soul and natural objects without relating this sympathy to its divine cause is considered to practise magic rather than theurgy.[193]

This study accepts Iamblichus' definition of theurgy and the broad distinction which he draws between magic (γοητεία) and theurgy.[194] In attempting to define the nature of 'magic', scholars have noted that it is often used as a social and polemical label to describe and dismiss the practices (or the religion) of others.[195] Certainly, early Christian writers use the term 'magic' as a polemical category in this way and this study argues that such an agenda underlies the Christian conflation of magic with pagan religion and theurgy. While Iamblichus' distinction between magic and theurgy may well participate in this polemic, in the sense of counteracting and defending against the Christian claim that theurgy is nothing but magic, his differentiation is also philosophical and based on ethical considerations. Iamblichus' implicit claim that theurgy is a *lifelong* endeavour based on ethical discipline implies that there is a significant *ethical* difference (at least from a philosophical perspective) between the theurgist who practises ritual as part of a lifelong, soteriological endeavour to attain alignment and assimilation with the gods and the cosmos and as part of a collective form of worship (traditional religion), and certain types of itinerant magicians, who travel from city to city selling magical curses, amulets and charms to any individual who had the money to pay for their services, with little or no ethical considerations for harm or ill effect potentially caused by their wares.[196] The extent to which such a picture of itinerant magicians is merely negative stereotype and the extent to which it is grounded in historical reality is extremely difficult to ascertain and likely varied from individual to individual (a point seemingly recognised by Iamblichus, as evidenced by his greater focus on the practitioner rather than the practice), but there must at least have been certain individuals who employed 'magical' practices with no qualms about possible harm or deception caused. However, the situation becomes more complicated when we consider the identity of such 'magicians' – the so-called Greek magical papyri (*PGM*) have been cited to represent the kind of practices of the magicians which Iamblichus eschewed; yet recent scholarship argues that the source of some texts within the *PGM* were Egyptian priests, which suggests that at least some were derived from Egyptian religious tradition.[197] However, an

[192] Shaw (1995), 169.

[193] Iamblichus, *DM* 5.22 (231.7–12); 5.23 (232.1–7); 5.23 (234.9–11); 3.13 (129.15–130.13); 3.28 (168.10–169.2) 3.29 (371.4–372.7).

[194] Following Athanassiadi (1993), 120; 123; 127; Struck (2001), 29.

[195] Cf. for example, Philips (1986), 2732; Janowitz (2002), 1–3.

[196] Cf. Luck (1985), 21–22.

[197] Athanassiadi (1993), 120; Chlup (2012), 171. Egyptian priests as the source of *PGM* texts: Dieleman (2005), 2; Marx-Wolf (2010), 505–506; Fowden (1986), 166–167; Ritner (1995), 3354.

important consideration here is that the *PGM* represent a *modern* collection of disparate texts, collated from various papyri: as such, they attest to a diverse range of practices and methods.[198] Certain texts contained therein, such as the so-called 'Mithras Liturgy', an elaborate text setting out instructions for the immortalisation of the soul, bear similarities to the nature of theurgy as expounded by Iamblichus and the latter may well have approved of such practices and classified them as theurgy.[199] Other texts, particularly those which seek to inflict harm or to control another individual, would surely have been envisaged by Iamblichus as magic in the derogatory sense of γοητεία.[200] The source of some of the *PGM* texts may well have been Egyptian priests, for there was little or no separation between religion and magic in Egypt, such as we see elsewhere in the Graeco-Roman world; in Egypt lector-priests who worked in the temples often performed ritual practices for local people on a freelance basis during their leisure time and such ritual texts were stored in the 'House of Life' or Scriptorium, the temple library.[201] With his great respect for Egyptian religious tradition, Iamblichus was presumably well aware of this situation: thus, some practices attested in the *PGM* may well have been considered by the philosopher as theurgical rather than 'magical' because of their basis in religious tradition.[202]

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198 Cf. Luck (1985), 17; Brashear (1995), 3401ff., for a summary of the discovery, transmission and publication of the magical papyri. The so-called 'Theban cache' (a set of papyri allegedly discovered in a tomb in Thebes sometime before 1828) comprises *PGM* IV, XII, XIII, XIV and P. Leid. J. 397: this set of papyri comprise an ancient collection, but it is uncertain whether *PGM* I, II, III, VII and LXI were part of the same collection or discovered elsewhere.

199 *PGM* IV.475–829.

200 Examples might include *PGM* IV.2891–2942; *PGM* VII.390–393; *PGM* VII. 423–428, all of which seek to control another human or seek material gain as the central goal of the ritual.

201 Cf. for example, Ritner (1995), 3343, on the Faiyum Temple Archive containing papyri deriving from one or more temple scriptoria: 'Certain texts contain phrases recalling invocations or procedures in the longer manuals [of the *PGM* corpus] ... P. Vienna 6336 (first century B.C.) is surely a revelation spell, with its references to "dead ones" and "desiring knowledge" (col. 1/x + 4), "enchanting the sky", the House of Life, magicians, lector priests (col. 1/x + 5- x + 6). Further procedures appear in P. Vienna 6321 (mid to late second century) and 6343 (Roman).' Egyptian lector-priests: Fowden (1986), 166–167; Ritner (1995), 3354; Dieleman (2005).

202 Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 7.1; 7.5 (258.2–5); 8.4–5; Athanassiadi (1995), 246.

Are there 'Higher' and 'Lower' types of Theurgy?

Scholars have claimed that Iamblichus divided theurgy into two different types: a 'higher' and 'lower' theurgy.[203] This twofold division of theurgy relies on a view of the higher type as a more theoretical, mystical and philosophical theurgy and a practical theurgy as the 'lower' type, the latter employing material objects and rites as a necessity for humans still bound by earthly realities, whilst the former transcends their use.[204] Andrew Smith redefined this division, postulating a variant version of the definition of higher and lower types into 'vertical' and 'horizontal' types respectively. He argues that the 'horizontal' type does not extend outside the material universe and thus cannot lead to union with the divine whereas 'vertical' theurgy was linked with *noesis*, and does lead to union with the gods.[205] As an underlying foundation of this definition, Smith views horizontal theurgy as working on the level of physical sympathy (συμπάθεια), whereas vertical theurgy looks to the level of true causality and utilises the transcendent cause of sympathy – divine love. In her analysis of Proclus' attitude towards theurgy, Anne Sheppard modifies Smith's description, positing three rather than two types of theurgic ritual: one of which is concerned with earthly, human affairs (and is described by her as akin to 'white magic'); a higher type which makes the soul intellectually alive; and the highest type which involves all types of divine *mania* and brings about true mystical union. Sheppard states that the first two types probably involve ritual, while the highest type has 'no obvious place for rituals in it'; the first type is identified as Smith's lower or horizontal theurgy.[206]

However, the validity of distinctions between 'higher' and 'lower' types of theurgy has been questioned by Gregory Shaw, who argues that no such distinction is to be found in Iamblichus' work.[207] Given Iamblichus' discussion of the three different types of people who engage in theurgic ritual, we can certainly differentiate different *contexts* in which people engage in theurgy but this is different from theurgic activity *per se*.[208] There are some grounds for claiming that there were three different *stages of theurgic ritual* but the following qualifications must be observed: crucially, all stages comprise ritual acts; all are cumulative and

[203] Rosán (1949), 213–214; Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), Excursus iv; Sodano (1958), Appendix I; Smith (1974), 90ff.

[204] Cf. especially Rosán (1949), 213–214; Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 462–463.

[205] Smith (1974), 91; 111–121: Smith's criterion for distinguishing between so-called 'lower' and 'higher' types of theurgy according to whether they operate using sympathy on a horizontal level (lower theurgy) or according to a vertical axis (higher theurgy) through divine love actually maps neatly onto Iamblichus' distinction between γοητεία ('magic') and theurgy, rather than reflecting different levels of theurgy itself.

[206] Sheppard (1982), 217–218.

[207] Shaw (1985), 8–10; 22–26; (1995), 189–91 *contra* Smith (1974), 111–121.

[208] Shaw (1985), 22–24.

inclusive. If we bear these caveats in mind, three 'stages' of theurgic ritual can be delineated rather than distinguishing a 'higher' and a 'lower' type, given that this terminology has pejorative connotations for the 'lower' type especially.[209] Given that Iamblichus subscribed to the doctrine of rebirth, it is clear that he considered these stages of theurgy to be cumulative and that *all* human beings have to engage in each stage *cumulatively* in an orderly manner in their succession of human lives.[210] Moreover, the stages are inclusive: they were considered to integrate and perfect the previous stage rather than discarding it; thus, the more advanced stages of theurgy presuppose the lower stages.[211] Furthermore, these stages cannot be distinguished according to 'vertical' (connecting with their divine cause through divine love) and 'horizontal' (operating within the physical cosmos through sympathy only) criteria. According to Iamblichus, *all* stages of theurgic ritual worked on a 'vertical' axis, which connected the theurgist to the gods: the underlying basis of theurgy remained the same no matter what level it was practised on.[212]

The Scope of this Work

The book of Pythagorean philosophy which Apollonios received from the Oracle of Trophonios and Sosipatra's philosophical and mystical books given to her by the Chaldean prophets raise the issue of the inextricable connections between oracles, mythology and literature. Sosipatra was said to have been initiated into Chaldean mysteries, a theme which suggests close connections between initiation and oracles. Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* draws parallels between the reception of oracles, allegory and initiation into mystery cults, suggesting methodologies by which oracles were envisaged within Neoplatonism. Chapter 2 will explore these parallels, claiming that such connections have to be viewed within the wider Late Antique historical context of attitudes towards literature and religion. Moreover,

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[209] Iamblichus, *DM* 5.18–19. I occasionally use the 'higher' and 'lower' terminology because of its familiarity to distinguish between non-material and material ritual contexts but place these terms in speech marks to illustrate their dubious nature.

[210] This point has not been discussed in relation to the stages of theurgy, yet its implications are vital: even theurgists who reached the culmination of theurgy and practised 'incorporeal' worship are envisaged as practising the prior stages in a previous life (as well as in their current life) in order to reach that stage of ritual praxis.

[211] Iamblichus, *DM* 5.14 (217.8–13); 5.16 (221.1–222.3); 5.17 (222.4–11); 5.20 (227.11–228.10); 5.21; 5.22 (231.7–12).

[212] Shaw (1985), 22: all theurgical activity should be defined as 'vertical' because 'it was the thread which passed through all spheres of the manifestation of reality, and of souls' invovement in that manifestation .... its unifying power remained the same, while being expressed differently in different psychological and material contexts'. Cf. Chapter 5 for further discussion.

this chapter will explore Porphyry's characterisation of oracles as 'symbols' and their interconnections with allegorical exegesis, as well as the oracle on Plotinus.

In Late Antiquity, pagan–Christian religious debates often focused on the nature and roles of oracles and ritual as a potential source of religious authority and validity. Chapter 3 explores these debates by focusing on a key case study: the implicit and polemical pagan–Christian debate which is evidenced in Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*, which engages with and argues against Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*.

The exchange between Porphyry and Iamblichus evident in the *Letter to Anebo* and *De Mysteriis*, which includes exploration of the operation of oracles, has often been characterised as a hostile disagreement between these philosophers, comprising attack and counter-attack. Chapter 4 explores the nature of this dialogue, reassessing the location of this exchange within the philosophical genres of Platonic dialogue and 'Problems and Solutions'. To support this reassessment, the debate seen in Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* and Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* is compared with the Late Antique *Hermetica*: while vastly different, both works represent educational and protreptic dialogues on religious practices.

Chapter 5 examines broader issues regarding the relationship between rationality and ritual in Neoplatonism and possible implications for uses and roles of divination. Plotinus' views of magic, theurgy and the idea of mystical union with the One, and Porphyry's and Iamblichus' views of theurgy will be explored. The characterisation of Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* as irrational, a decisive move away from (and in opposition to) the rational Hellenism of Plotinus, assumes a dichotomous opposition between rationality and ritual. Drawing on recent anthropological, postcolonial and religious studies research which challenges the widespread, post-Enlightenment dichotomy between rationality and ritual, I examine the implications of these challenges, suggesting that such a dichotomy can only be applied anachronistically to theurgy and Neoplatonism. Rather, Iamblichus conceptualises theurgic divination and ritual as supra-rational, envisaging rationality and revelation as complementary and interlinked, rather than mutually exclusive, categories. Supra-rationality is envisaged in later Neoplatonism as the sphere of inspired divination, representing the inclusion, culmination and transcendence of rationality rather than any lack of rationality.

Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* offers a typology of diverse types of divination, categorising them into 'inductive' and 'inspired' types, drawing on traditional Greek conceptions of divination which treat the latter as derived from divine inspiration, a theme explored in Chapter 6. Iamblichus also explores the nature and operation of the Oracles at Delphi, Didyma and Claros, dream divination and inductive types of divination. Chapter 7 will explore Iamblichus' perspectives on these varied types of divination, as well as the role of inspired divination within theurgic ritual, arguing that the centrality of divination within theurgy and

later Neoplatonism stems from Iamblichus' conception of divination as a supra-rational phenomenon, acting as a stage on the way to, and a sign of, mystical union with the divine which forms the central purpose of theurgy.

Chapter 2
Oracles, Allegory and Mystery Cults

Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* draws implicit parallels between the reception of oracles, allegory and initiation into mystery cults, suggesting methodologies by which oracles were envisaged and interpreted within Neoplatonism. This chapter will examine these parallels and will claim, contrary to the long-standing scholarly characterisation of allegory as a marginal phenomenon, that such connections have to be viewed within the wider Late Antique historical context of attitudes towards literature and religion, drawing on practices such as the oracular use of Homer exhibited within the *Homeromanteia* (Oracles of Homer) and initiation into mystery cults prior to oracular consultation at the Oracle of Claros.[1] The oracle on Plotinus, an elaborate oracle crammed with literary and mythological allusions and recorded in Porphyry's *Life*, forms an important part of this context and will also be examined.[2] Drawing on Porphyry's characterisation of oracles as *symbola* and their interconnections with allegorical exegesis, I will attempt to show the centrality of allegorical interpretation to Porphyry's endeavour, and the parallels apparent between the type of 'divine vision' accessible to those who interpret oracles and mythological texts and those who undergo initiation into mystery cults. I will argue that oracles and ritual are inextricably connected for Porphyry: an oracle is interpreted within a ritualistic context and can function as a type of 'philosophical initiation'.

Porphyry's Prologue: the Purpose of Oracles

The prologue of Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* contains some important statements regarding the purpose of the work and the appropriate methods for reading and interpreting the oracles contained therein. Porphyry sets out his conceptualisation of oracles and their purposes, and his intended audience:

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[1] Although the use of allegory within Late Antique Jewish and Christian traditions (particularly within the works of Origen, Clement of Alexandria and Philo) is well recognised, within the Graeco-Roman context allegory (especially 'mystical' allegory) is often seen as a marginal phenomenon employed by a few philosophers which had little connection with 'mainstream' Graeco-Roman religious tradition and is characterised as atypical of wider cultural patterns and norms: cf. the comments of Lamberton (1986), viii–ix; Struck (2002), 120.

[2] Porphyry, *Plot.* 22.13–63.

> Βέβαιος δὲ καὶ μόνιμος ὁ ἐντεῦθεν ὡς ἂν ἐκ μόνου βεβαίου τὰς ἐλπίδας τοῦ σωθῆναι ἀρυτόμενος· οἷς δὴ καὶ μεταδώσεις μηδὲν ὑφαιρούμενος. ἐπεὶ κἀγῶ τοὺς θεοὺς μαρτύρομαι ὡς οὐδὲν οὔτε προστέθεικα οὔτε ἀφεῖλον τῶν χρησθέντων νοημάτων, εἰ μή που λέξιν ἡμαρτημένην διώρθωσα ἢ πρὸς τὸ σαφέστερον μεταβέβληκα ἢ τὸ μέτρον ἐλλεῖπον ἀνεπλήρωσα ἤ τι τῶν μὴ πρὸς τὴν πρόθεσιν συντεινόντων διέγραψα, ὡς τόν γε νοῦν ἀκραιφνῆ τῶν ῥηθέντων διετήρησα, εὐλαβούμενος τὴν ἐκ τούτων ἀσέβειαν μᾶλλον ἢ τὴν ἐκ τῆς ἱεροσυλίας τιμωρὸν ἑπομένην δίκην.
>
> Sure, then, and steadfast thenceforth is he who draws his hopes for salvation from this as if it were the only sure source, and to such you will impart information holding nothing back. For I myself call the gods to witness, that I have not added anything, nor taken anything away from the meaning of the oracular responses, except perhaps where I have corrected an erroneous phrase, or where I have made a change for greater clarity, or completed the metre when defective, or struck out anything that was not relevant for the purpose so that I preserved the sense of what was spoken untouched, guarding against the impiety of such changes, rather than against the avenging justice that follows such sacrilege.[3]

Porphyry clearly asserts that, although he may have made small technical changes to the oracular responses, he has not changed the inherent meaning or sense of the oracles within his work, since to do so would be impious. This clearly demonstrates his piety, reverence and high regard for the gods of traditional religion, and displays his belief that oracles come from the gods and are divine, sacred utterances. The next section of the prologue sets out the scope and purposes of the work:

> ἕξει δὲ ἡ παροῦσα συναγωγὴ πολλῶν μὲν τῶν κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν δογμάτων ἀναγραφήν, ὡς οἱ θεοὶ τἀληθὲς ἔχειν ἐθέσπισαν· ἐπ' ὀλίγον δὲ καὶ τῆς χρηστικῆς ἁψόμεθα πραγματείας, ἥτις πρός τε τὴν θεωρίαν ὀνήσει καὶ τὴν ἄλλην κάθαρσιν τοῦ βίου. ἣν δ' ἔχει ὠφέλειαν ἡ συναγωγή, μάλιστα εἴσονται ὅσοιπερ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ὠδίναντες ηὕξαντό ποτε τῆς ἐκ θεῶν ἐπιφανείας τυχόντες ἀνάπαυσιν λαβεῖν τῆς ἀπορίας διὰ τὴν τῶν λεγόντων ἀξιόπιστον διδασκαλίαν.
>
> And our present collection will contain a record of many philosophical doctrines, as the gods declared by oracle the truth to be; but to a small extent we shall also touch upon the practice of divination, which will help us in relation to contemplation, and for the general purification of life. And the utility which this

[3] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 303F, lines 14–23 = *PE* 4.6.2.

> collection possesses will be especially known to those who have laboured with the truth, and prayed that by receiving the manifestation of it from the gods they will gain relief from their difficulty through the trustworthy teaching of the speakers.[4]

Porphyry here explains his purpose in collecting oracles: to collect a record of 'many philosophical doctrines' which he maintains are contained within these oracles, 'as the gods declared by oracle the truth to be'. Thus, it already seems as though Porphyry holds that oracles are a tool for philosophical reflection and contemplation, since they contain 'philosophical doctrines'. He also holds that oracles are a source for the revelation of divine truth, since they originate from the gods.

Andrew Smith has noted that those who view Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* as a product of a superstitious, early phase of Porphyry's development generally rely on the *content* of many oracles quoted in the text and tend to ignore this prologue.[5] As Smith points out, Porphyry's programmatic comments in the prologue, which make it clear that 'the book will have more to say about philosophy than about cult practice', are largely ignored: Porphyry's comments make it clear that the surviving material, which is largely concerned with ritual (sacrifice, prophecy, manifestations of the gods), does not give an adequate picture of the work as a whole.[6] This represents an important methodological observation: the surviving material does not delineate the overall scope of the work adequately, particularly since so little of Porphyry's commentary on the oracles survives. However, it is important to exercise some caution in our judgement, since Porphyry's prologue makes it clear that for him, cult practice and philosophy are very closely connected. Porphyry states that the collection will also encompass a little on 'the practice of divination which will help us in relation to the contemplation and the general purification of life'.[7] Thus, the practice of divination in itself is viewed as useful for contemplation and as a purification for one's soul. This important statement suggests that ritual practices such as divination are conceived by Porphyry as connected with contemplation, purification and a philosophical way of life.

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[4] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 303F, lines 23–30 = *PE* 4. 6.2–7.2.

[5] Smith (1997), 29. Cf. O'Meara (1969), 8, n. 9.

[6] Smith (1997), 29.

[7] Following Gifford (1903; repr. 1981), 1.157; Smith (1987), 735; *contra* Johnson (2009), 108–109, who translates τῆς χρηστικῆς πραγματείας as 'useful discussion', because Porphyry states that he will add this briefly to his work. This interpretation is unconvincing because: (1) it construes 'the practice of divination' as referring to oracles generally which would make little sense, while it is far more likely to refer specifically to the oracles which discuss the divinatory process itself and the nature of divine inspiration (examined below, and see Chapter 3, p. 106, n. 114); (2) the extant fragments are taken by Johnson as representative of the work as a whole, without accounting for the polemical agenda of Eusebius and other Christian authors who cite them.

In this section of the prologue, we see something of the intended audience of the *Philosophy from Oracles*: it is aimed at those who 'have ever laboured with the truth, and prayed that by receiving the manifestation of it from the gods they will gain relief from their difficulty through the trustworthy teaching of the speakers'.[8] While this statement is general, it is very clear first of all that the work is aimed at an audience of followers of Graeco-Roman religious traditions, since Porphyry explicitly mentions that it is aimed at those who have prayed to the gods that they might be relieved of their perplexity (ἀπορία). The intended pagan audience is also confirmed by Porphyry's injunction later in the prologue not to allow the profane to have access to the collection.[9] 'The profane' mentioned by Porphyry here would clearly include the Christians, whom Porphyry considers to be impious (because of their false opinions about the divine) and deserters of their ancestral traditions. In his *Letter to Marcella*, Porphyry issues a warning regarding speaking of the divine to those who hold false opinions:

> Λόγον γὰρ <περὶ> θεοῦ τοῖς ὑπὸ δόξης διεφθαρμένοις λέγειν οὐκ ἀσφαλές· καὶ γὰρ καὶ τἀληθῆ λέγειν ἐπὶ τούτων περὶ θεοῦ καὶ τὰ ψευδῆ κίνδυνον ἴσον φέρει.
>
> For it is not safe to speak of the divine with those who are corrupted by false opinion. Yea, and in their presence to speak truth or falsehood about the divine is fraught with equal danger.[10]

Secondly, the fact that the work is aimed at those who have ever 'laboured with the truth', those who are seeking truth, clearly refers to philosophers.[11] It may also refer to other followers of Graeco-Roman religious tradition who seek to understand further the philosophical ideas and doctrines underlying their religious traditions and customs.

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[8] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 303F, lines 28–30.

[9] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 304F = *PE* 4.7.2–8.1.

[10] Porphyry, *Marc.* 15.14–17, ed. Des Places (1982). All citations of this work are drawn from this edition. Trs. Zimmern (1986), with emendations. Material excerpted from Porphyry's *Letter to his Wife Marcella © 1986 by Phanes Press* with permission of Phanes Press c/o Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC Newburyport, MA and San Francisco, CA www.redwheelweiser.com.

[11] Johnson (2009), 112; *contra* Simmons (1995), 265–266, who claims that 'this work was evidently constructed to serve as a kind of pagan religious manual pointing the way of salvation to the common man'. While the text may have been aimed at pagan readers interested in philosophy, it assumes that the intended readership have been initiated into a mystery cult and that they are literate.

Porphyry and the Quest for the Salvation of the Soul

The next section of the prologue states that the collection is intended for those who 'have arranged their plan of life with a view to the salvation of the soul' (τὸν βίον ἐνστησαμένοις πρὸς τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς σωτηρίαν).[12] This surely refers to philosophers, and strengthens the idea that this collection is aimed at philosophers or those interested in philosophy. As we have seen, earlier in the prologue, Porphyry had spoken of the *Philosophy from Oracles* as a tool for those who seek salvation, 'Sure, then, and steadfast thenceforth is he who draws his hopes for salvation from this as if it were the only sure source.'[13] Thus, for Porphyry, oracles can assist the philosopher with the salvation of the soul. The ways in which they can contribute towards this soteriological goal will be explored throughout this chapter.

But what exactly does Porphyry mean by 'salvation of the soul' (τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς σωτηρίαν)? Augustine claims that in the (now lost) work *On the Return of the Soul* (*De regressu animae*), Porphyry had not found a 'universal way to salvation':

> *Cum autem dicit Porphyrius in primo iuxta finem de regressu animae libro nondum receptum in unam quandam sectam, quod uniuersalem contineat uiam animae liberandae, uel a philosophia uerissima aliqua uel ab Indorum moribus ac disciplina, aut inductione Chaldaeorum aut alia qualibet uia, nondumque in suam notitiam eandem uiam historiali cognitione perlatam: procul dubio confitetur esse aliquam, sed nondum in suam uenisse notitiam.*
>
> Now Porphyry says – towards the end of his first book *On the Return of the Soul* – that no doctrine has yet been established to form the teaching of a philosophical sect, which offers a universal way for the liberation of the soul; no such way has been produced by any philosophy (in the truest sense of the word), or by the moral teaching and disciplines of the Indians, or by the magical spells of the Chaldeans, or in any other way, and that this universal way had never been brought to his knowledge in his study of history. He admits without any doubt that such a way exists, but confesses that it had never come to his notice.[14]

Does Porphyry acknowledge that there was a universal, single way of salvation for the soul? We have to exercise great caution when attempting to extract Porphyry's

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[12] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 304F, lines 8–9 = *PE* 4.7.2–8.1.

[13] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 303F, lines 14–15.

[14] Augustine, *City of God* 10.32.5–11 (*CCSL* 47); trs. Bettenson (1972; repr. 2003) = Porph. *De regressu animae* 302F (Smith). All citations of this work are drawn from this edition and all translations are those of Bettenson, unless otherwise stated.

views from fragments of Augustine, who had his own polemical agenda.[15] Augustine's agenda is clear from the previous passage, where he emphasises that Christianity is the only religion which contains the universal way of liberating the soul.[16] As Gillian Clark has noted, 'Augustine was not out to give a balanced review of what Porphyry said, and in book 10 of the *City of God* he was looking for ammunition.'[17] Clark notes that the phrase *procul dubio*, 'undoubtedly', is a warning signal in this passage and that it is much more likely that Porphyry denied any claim that there was a single way of liberating the soul, and that it is Augustine who introduces the theme of the universal way.[18] Additionally, as Clark emphasises, 'way' here is a road, not a method: the Latin term *via* translates the Greek term ὁδός, a word which occurs in a fragment of Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*, in which Porphyry comments on an oracle of Apollo which had praised the wisdom of diverse ethnic groups such as the Egyptians, the Phoenicians and Assyrians:

> Χαλκόδετος γὰρ ἡ πρὸς θεοὺς ὁδὸς αἰπεινή τε καὶ τραχεῖα, ἧς πολλὰς ἀτραποὺς βάρβαροι μὲν ἐξεῦρον, Ἕλληνες ἐπλανήθησαν, οἱ δὲ κρατοῦντες ἤδη καὶ διέφθειραν· τὴν δὲ εὕρεσιν Αἰγυπτίοις ὁ θεὸς ἐμαρτύρησε Φοίνιξί τε καὶ Χαλδαίοις (Ἀσσύριοι γὰρ οὗτοι) Λυδοῖς τε καὶ Ἑβραίοις.
>
> For the road to the gods is brass-bound, steep and rough, of which the barbarians have found many paths, but the Greeks have gone astray, and the ones who held it have already corrupted it. And the god bears witness to the discovery by the Egyptians, the Phoenicians, the Chaldeans (for these are the Assyrians), the Lydians and the Hebrews.[19]

Porphyry explicitly connects the 'salvation of the soul' (τῆς ψυχῆς τὴν σωτηρίαν) with the road to the gods (ἡ πρὸς θεοὺς ὁδὸς), and argues that within the road to the gods there are many pathways, and that these pathways are found in many non-Greek religious traditions, including 'Chaldean' wisdom, which we know that Porphyry was deeply interested in, given that he wrote a commentary

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[15] Cf. Clark (2007), 129–133.

[16] Augustine, *City of God* 10.32.1–2 (*CCSL* 47): 'This [i.e. Christianity] is the religion which contains the universal way for the liberation of the soul, since no soul can be freed by any other way' (*Haec est religio, quae uniuersalem continet uiam animae liberandae, quoniam nulla nisi hac liberari potest*).

[17] Clark (1999), 127.

[18] Cf. Clark's discussion of this passage: (2007), 136–140, to which I am indebted in this section, *contra* Simmons (1995), 265, who accepts Augustine's claim wholesale and argues that Porphyry was looking for a universal way of salvation.

[19] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac*. 324F, lines 4–8 = *PE* 9.10.3–5.

on the *Chaldean Oracles*.[20] As Clark suggests, Porphyry claimed that 'a wide range of ethnic traditions ... provided ways to liberation'.[21] The idea that many pathways (different religious, cultural and ethnic traditions) comprise the road to the divine and enable 'the salvation of the soul' demonstrates Porphyry's polytheistic ('unity-in-plurality') approach, which is also clear in his views on divination.[22] Porphyry's claim here accords with the views of Numenius, who discusses the rites and teachings established by Brahmans, Jews, Magi and Egyptians and states that they are in accordance with Plato.[23]

It is also clear from elsewhere that Porphyry considers ascent to the divine as the salvation of the soul. In his *Letter to Marcella*, Porphyry states 'we must have faith that our only salvation is in turning to the divine' (Πιστεῦσαι γὰρ δεῖ ὅτι μόνη σωτηρία ἡ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἐπιστροφή).[24] He also speaks of the necessity of great effort and work in order to achieve the ascent to the gods:

> Ἀκούεις δὲ καὶ τὸν Ἡρακλέα τοὺς τε Διοσκούρους καὶ τὸν Ἀσκληπιὸν τούς τε ἄλλους ὅσοι θεῶν παῖδες ἐγένοντο ὡς διὰ τῶν πόνων καὶ τῆς καρτερίας τὴν μακαρίαν εἰς θεοὺς ὁδὸν ἐξετέλεσαν. Οὐ γὰρ ἐκ τῶν δι' ἡδονῆς βεβιωκότων ἀνθρώπων αἱ εἰς θεὸν ἀναδρομαί, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῶν τὰ μέγιστα τῶν συμβαινόντων γενναίως διενεγκεῖν μεμαθηκότων.'
>
> You hear that Heracles and the Dioscuri and Asclepius and all other children of the gods, through toil and steadfastness accomplished the blessed journey to heaven. For it is not those who live a life of pleasure that make the ascent to the gods, but rather those who have nobly learnt to endure the greatest misfortunes.[25]

The ascent to the gods involves becoming like the divine:

> αὐτὸς δὲ ἑαυτὸν καὶ εὐάρεστον ποιεῖ θεῷ καὶ ἐκθεοῖ τῇ τῆς ἰδίας διαθέσεως ὁμοιότητι τῷ μετὰ ἀφθαρσίας μακαρίῳ.

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[20] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac*. 324F, lines 3–4. Porphyry's involvement with the *Chaldean Oracles*: Chapter 1, pp. 9–10, n. 37; Clark (2007), 139.

[21] Clark (2007), 137, *contra* Simmons (1995), 265–266.

[22] *Contra* Simmons (1995), 265–266.

[23] Numenius, *On the Good* F1a (Des Places); Plutarch, *De Is.* 377f–378a. Cf. O'Meara (1969), 117–118.

[24] Porphyry, *Marc.* 24.1–2 (Des Places, 120); trs. Zimmern (1986) with emendations. Cf. also *Marc*. 8: τῆς σωτηρίας τὴν ὁδὸν.

[25] Porphyry, *Marc*. 7.9–15; trs. Zimmern (1986) with emendations. Cf. also *Marc.* 6.6–21; *Abst.* 2.53.2. Material excerpted from Porphyry's *Letter to his Wife Marcella* © 1986 by Phanes Press with permission of Phanes Press c/o Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC Newburyport, MA and San Francisco, CA www.redwheelweiser.com.

> But he makes himself well-pleasing and consecrated to the divine by assimilating his own disposition to the blessed and incorruptible nature.[26]

For Porphyry, it is imitation of and assimilation with the divine (or divinisation) which enables one to ascend to the gods. In several works, he states that it is by making one's mind alike to the divine that one imitates the gods.[27] Given that Porphyry thinks that the salvation of the soul consists in becoming like the divine, it becomes clearer how the oracles of the gods could assist in the salvation of the soul, since the philosopher sees the oracles as the words of the gods themselves.

Oracles and Mystery Cults

Mystery Cult Terminology in Porphyry's Prologue

The final two extant sections of the prologue offer the most revealing evidence for Porphyry's views of the role of oracles. The last section contains the following injunction from Porphyry:

> Ταῦτά μοι ὡς ἀρρήτων ἀρρητότερα κρύπτειν· οὐδὲ γὰρ οἱ θεοὶ φανερῶς περὶ αὐτῶν ἐθέσπισαν, ἀλλὰ δι' αἰνιγμάτων.
>
> These things I ask you to conceal as the most unutterable of secrets. For not even the gods prophesied about them openly, but through enigmas.[28]

The language used by Porphyry here to describe the divine truth contained within the oracles is identical to that used throughout Antiquity to describe the mystery cults of Graeco-Roman religion, such as the Eleusinian mysteries and various other mystery cults. In particular, the phrase 'the most unspeakable of secrets' (ἀρρήτων ἀρρητότερα) is identical to the terminology which was frequently used throughout Antiquity to refer to and characterise the mystery cults.[29] These mysteries were said to be 'unutterable/unspeakable' (ἄρρητα)

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[26] Porph. *Marc.* 17.5–7; trs. Zimmern (1986) with emendations. Cf. also *Marc*. 15.6: 'Now a man who was worthy of God would be himself a god' (ὁ δὲ ἄξιος ἄνθρωπος θεοῦ θεὸς ἂν εἴη); *Abst.* 1.54.6; 2.3.1. Material excerpted from Porphyry's *Letter to his Wife Marcella* © 1986 by Phanes Press with permission of Phanes Press c/o Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC Newburyport, MA and San Francisco, CA www.redwheelweiser.com.

[27] Porphyry, *Marc*. 16.7–10; *Abst*. 2.34.3; 2.45.4; 2.49.1; 2.49.3.

[28] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac*. 305F, lines 2–3 = *PE* 4.8.2.

[29] The following citations all use the virtually interchangeable terms ἄρρητα ('unspeakable') and ἀπορρήτα ('forbidden') to refer to mystery cults and rituals: *Arrhetos telete* (Eleusis) in a fifth-century epigram from the Eleusinion Agora III.226 = *IG* I (3) 953

both in the sense of the secrecy imposed on the initiates, who were forbidden to divulge the mysteries to the uninitiated, and in the sense that, to quote Walter Burkert, 'the central and decisive elements of the mysteries were not thought to be accessible to verbalization'.[30]

In using mystery cult terminology to characterise the nature of divine and philosophical truth, Porphyry was continuing a long-held practice within the Platonic tradition. Taking their cue from Plato, whose *Symposium* is replete with language and imagery from the Eleusinian mysteries,[31] many Platonic philosophers used mystery cult terminology for confirmation of the basic tenets of their philosophy, for illustration, and for the inclusion of a religious dimension to explain the philosophical vision of truth which culminated from the exercises of philosophical dialectic and discursive thinking.

Mystery Cults and Philosophical Vision in Plato, Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism

Within certain dialogues, Plato frequently employs mystery cult terminology and imagery to describe the philosophical vision and contemplation of the Forms. For instance, in the *Phaedo* Socrates compares philosophers to those who have been 'purified' and 'initiated', referring to initiatory rites in general.[32] In the *Symposium*, Plato uses the traditional language of the Festival of the greater mysteries at Eleusis to describe the philosopher's contemplation of the Forms. Within his speech which relates the discourse of Diotima, Socrates compares the philosopher's vision of the Forms to the ἐποπτεία, the moment of mystic revelation at the Eleusinian mysteries.[33] Plato's *Phaedrus* makes even more prominent use of the language of

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= Hansen no. 317; *arrhetos Kore* Euripides, F63; *Helen*, 1307 (ἀρρήτου κούρας: used to refer to Persephone, whom the Athenians called the Maiden rather than speaking her name); ἄρρητα ὄργια (used to refer to Dionysiac mystery rituals, which must never be told to the uninitiated): Euripides, *Bacchae* 470–472; ἄρρητα ἱερὰ (Eleusis): Aristophanes, *Nubes* 302; μυστηρία ἀπόρρητα: Euripides, *Rhesus* 943; ἀπόρρητα ἐκ Θεσμοφόροιν (Thesmophoria): Aristophanes, *Ecclesiazuse* 442–443; τελεταὶ ἀπόρρητοι (Mithras): Plutarch, *Pompey* 24.5. Cf. Burkert (1987), 9, 69.

[30] Cf. Burkert (1987), 69.

[31] Plato, *Symp.* 201d–212c; Burkert (1987), 70, discusses the mystagogic speech of Diotima in Plato's *Symposium*, whose structure is widely held to imitate the pattern of the Eleusinian mysteries. The structure is (1) ἔλεγχος = purification, (2) instruction, including the myth of origin (203b–e) and (3) ἐποπτικά (210a). Cf. also Riedwig (1987), 5–14; 17–22; Wilson Nightingale (2005), 173–178.

[32] Plato, *Phd.* 69c–d and 81a; Wilson Nightingale (2005), 173.

[33] Plato, *Symp.* 209e–210a (Lamb): Here Diotima, just before she describes the ascent, says to Socrates that while he might be initiated (μυηθείης) into the matters discussed so far, he cannot yet advance to the next stage to see the 'final rites and revelations' (τὰ δὲ

mystic initiation and suggests that the soul's journey in the procession of the gods around the heavens is the original and perfect initiation for the human soul, which is reflected in the philosopher's contemplation of the Forms and reality, and in the initiates' vision during mystery rituals.[34] Socrates speaks of this primordial initiation and suggests that it can be re-enacted in one's earthly life.[35] Throughout this speech, Plato intermingles the philosophical conception of the recollection of the Forms with the experience of initiations at the Eleusinian mysteries, and particularly the vision of the 'sacred objects' in the initiation ceremony. Both the initiate at the mysteries and the philosopher see a vision that transforms them and brings joy and a blessed destiny. The general scholarly consensus is that Plato uses mystery cult terminology in a metaphorical sense: philosophical truth is metaphorically analogous to the vision, ἐποπτεία, gained in the mystery rituals (τελεταί).[36]

Drawing on these Platonic allusions, Middle Platonist philosophers also discussed links between initiation in mystery cults and philosophical vision. Numenius once felt that he had betrayed the secret of the Eleusinian mysteries through philosophy, illustrating his conception of the inextricable link between the vision gained in the mystery ceremonies and the vision and understanding gained through philosophy.[37] Plutarch commonly used mystery cult terminology in this manner and spoke of 'taking a *logos* from philosophy as mystagogue' in order to penetrate to the core of the mysteries.[38] There is also evidence that Plutarch thought that the vision of divine reality and the intelligible world gained through philosophy, the highest vision possible for philosophers, was comparable to the ἐποπτεία of the Eleusinian mysteries:

τέλεα καὶ ἐποπτικά), using the technical language of the Eleusinian mysteries, where there were two classes of initiates, the μύστης ('initiate') who took part in the mystery rites for the first time, and the ἐπόπτης ('watcher') who came to the festival for at least the second time to see the ἐποπτικά, the highest mysteries. Diotima identifies Socrates as a μύστης. He is not yet an ἐπόπτης and thus cannot be granted the vision of the highest mysteries. When she describes the ἐποπτικά in the following passage, Diotima is clearly referring to the contemplation of the Forms. Cf. Riedweg (1987), 2–29 (especially 2–4).

[34] Plato, *Phdr.* 251a, 249c. Cf. Riedweg (1987), 30–67.

[35] Plato, *Phdr.* 250b–c. Cf. Riedweg (1987), 47–56.

[36] For a recent assessment, cf. Wilson Nightingale (2005), 151–80, who argues that, 'In developing the notion of private philosophic *theōria*, Plato *takes as his model* the *theōria* at the Festival of the Greater Mysteries as Eleusis' [my emphasis]. Cf. also Riedweg (1987), 67–69; Morgan (1990), 80–99. But see Plato, *Meno* 81a, ed. and trs. Lamb (1924; repr. 1962), which may suggest a deeper connection between priests and philosophical ideas. Burkert (1987), 70–72, takes this statement seriously enough to adduce from it that within mystery cults, priests, priestesses and other sacred officials had their own sacred books, *hieroi logoi*.

[37] Numenius, F55 (Des Places) = Macrobius, *In Somn*. I.2.19.

[38] Plutarch, *De Is.* 378a11–12, trs. Babbit (1936; repr. 2003). Cf. Brisson (2004), 64–70.

> ἡ δὲ τοῦ νοητοῦ καὶ εἰλικρινοῦς καὶ ἁπλοῦ νόησις ὥσπερ ἀστραπὴ διαλάμψασα τῆς ψυχῆς ἅπαξ ποτὲ θιγεῖν καὶ προσιδεῖν παρέσχε. διὸ καὶ Πλάτων καὶ Ἀριστοτέλης ἐποπτικὸν τοῦτο τὸ μέρος τῆς φιλοσοφίας καλοῦσιν, ὡς οἱ τὰ δοξαστὰ καὶ μεικτὰ καὶ παντοδαπὰ ταῦτα παραμειψάμενοι τῷ λόγῳ, πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον ἐκεῖνο καὶ ἁπλοῦν καὶ ἄυλον ἐξάλλονται, καὶ θιγόντες ἀμωσγέπως τῆς περὶ αὐτὸ καθαρᾶς ἀληθείας οἷον ἐντελῆ τέλος ἔχειν φιλοσοφίαν νομίζουσι.
>
> But the apperception of the conceptual, the pure, and the simple, shining through the soul like a flash of lightning, affords an opportunity to touch and see it but once. For this reason Plato and Aristotle call this part of philosophy the epoptic or mystic part, inasmuch as those who have passed beyond these conjectural and confused matters of all sorts by means of Reason proceed by leaps and bounds to that primary, simple and immaterial principle; and when they have somehow attained contact with the pure truth abiding about it, they think that they have the whole of philosophy completely, as it were, within their grasp.[39]

Here, Plutarch speaks of the pure vision of divine principles gained through philosophy which 'shines through the soul like a flash of lightning', as the ἐποπτεία, the 'divine vision' of philosophy. He maintains that Plato and Aristotle themselves called this the epoptic or mystic part of philosophy, demonstrating the common conception running through the Platonic tradition that Plato himself had viewed the divine vision of philosophy as akin to that of the ἐποπτεία of the Eleusinian mystery cult.

Later Neoplatonist philosophers developed these connections further: they thought that the type of divine vision possible for initiates to attain during mystery rituals was very similar or identical to the type of divine vision attainable through philosophy and theurgic ritual. Proclus speaks of mystery rituals as causing a type of sympathy (συμπάθεια) between the souls of initiates and the ritual which is unintelligible to mortals.[40] Proclus' evidence for Eleusinian mystery ritual is generally taken seriously as containing authentic tradition since he knew the

[39] Plutarch, *De Is.* 382d5–e3.

[40] Proclus, *In Remp*. II.108.17–30 (Kroll), trs. Burkert (1987), 114: αἱ τελεταὶ... συμπαθείας εἰσὶν αἴτιαι ταῖς ψυχαῖς περὶ τὰ δρώμενα τρόπον ἄγνωστον ἡμῖν καὶ θεῖον· ὡς τοὺς μὲν τῶν τελουμένων καταπλήττεσθαι δειμάτων θείων πλήρεις γιγνομένους, τοὺς δὲ συνδιατίθεσθαι τοῖς ἱεροῖς συμβόλοις καὶ ἑαυτῶν ἐκστάντας ὅλους ἐνιδρῦσθαι τοῖς θεοῖς καὶ ἐνθεάζειν. 'They cause sympathy of the souls with the ritual [*dromena*] in a way that is unintelligible to us, and divine, so that some of the initiands are stricken with panic, being filled with divine awe; others assimilate themselves to the holy symbols, leave their own identity, become at home with the gods, and experience divine possession.'

daughter of Nestorius, the Eleusinian hierophant, and admired her as a guardian of the most sacred traditions.[41]

The Divine Vision of Oracles and Mystery Cults in Porphyry's Work

Porphyry's use of mystery cult terminology in the prologue to his *Philosophy from Oracles* would have been immediately recognisable to ancient readers. This usage of mystery cult terminology clearly demonstrates that Porphyry holds that the divine and philosophical truth inherent in oracles is at least analogous to, if not fully identical with, the kind of divine truth and vision which was thought to characterise the final stage, ἐποπτεία, of the Eleusinian mysteries and other mystery cults. This parallel is clearly supported by the preceding section of the prologue:

> Σὺ δ' εἴπερ τι καὶ ταῦτα πειρῶ μὴ δημοσιεύειν μηδ' ἄχρι καὶ τῶν βεβήλων ῥίπτειν αὐτὰ δόξης ἕνεκα ἢ κέρδους ἤ τινος ἄλλης οὐκ εὐαγοῦς κολακείας. κίνδυνος γὰρ οὐ σοὶ μόνον τὰς ἐντολὰς παραβαίνοντι ταύτας, ἀλλὰ κἀμοὶ ῥᾳδίως πιστεύσαντι τῷ στέγειν παρ' ἑαυτῷ μὴ δυναμένῳ τὰς εὐποιίας. δοτέον δὴ τοῖς τὸν βίον ἐνστησαμένοις πρὸς τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς σωτηρίαν.
>
> Try above all not to reveal these things and not give them to the lowest people in order to gain reputation or profit or for any other impious means of currying favour. For this is a danger not only to you, if you contravene these instructions, but also to me having too easily trusted the person not able to keep the benefits secret. One should give them to those who have arranged their life with a view to the salvation of the soul.[42]

Porphyry's injunction to his readers to keep the oracular responses secret from those who are 'profane', those who have not been 'initiated' into the inner sanctum of philosophy, strongly recalls the secrecy imposed upon the initiates of mystery cults.

For Porphyry then, the divine truth contained within oracles is at the very least analogous to the vision gained in the final stage of the mystery ceremonies. The final stage of the Eleusinian mysteries (ἐποπτεία) was shrouded in secrecy: hence, little is known of what this stage of the mysteries entailed. However, according to the evidence we do have, it seems to have involved some sort of mythical re-enactment

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[41] Burkert (1987), 113, asserts the importance of taking Proclus' statements relating to the Eleusinian mysteries seriously for this reason. Nestorius: see Chapter 7, p. 280.

[42] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 304F, lines 3–9 = *PE* 4.7.2–8.1.

of the myth of Persephone and her journey to the Underworld.[43] Thus, it seems as though for Porphyry, the kind of mythical and enigmatic expression which manifests itself through oracles could bestow an identical (or at least similar) level of vision to that which could be gained through the mythical enactment of the final stage of the mysteries, upon those who 'understood' these oracles and mystery ceremonies in the correct way. An episode recounted in the *Life of Plotinus*, where Porphyry discusses Plotinus' reaction to his recitation of a poem entitled *The Sacred Marriage*, is relevant here.[44] Plotinus' words allude to the three kinds of divine madness – prophetic, initiatory and poetic – discussed in Plato's *Phaedrus.*[45] Even more significantly, the final term, *hierophant*, refers explicitly to the chief priest of the Eleusinian mysteries and shows that for Porphyry, philosophy, poetry and mystery cult ritual were complementary and intrinsically linked ways to truth. More broadly, Porphyry's conception of the gods bestowing divine truth upon mortals enigmatically was based upon traditional Graeco-Roman religious conceptions and Platonic philosophical conceptions. Plutarch also emphasises the enigmatic nature of the gods' utterances, particularly in his treatise *On Isis and Osiris*, where he maintains that the Egyptians are 'divine' and have had a privileged relationship with the gods through their high level of understanding of the nature of divine transmission. For example, he explains the prominence of the Sphinxes frequently displayed outside Egyptian temples by arguing that, for the Egyptians, the Sphinx is a symbol (σύμβολον) of the enigmatic nature of divine communication and knowledge.[46]

Oracles and Mystery Cults in Late Antiquity

Porphyry's identification of the type of 'divine vision' experienced by the reader of oracles with that of the initiate of mystery ceremonies may have widespread parallels in Late Antiquity and is closely related to oracular praxis during this period. At Apollo's sanctuary at Didyma, mystery ceremonies were entrusted to the *hydrophoros* (literally, 'water-carrier'), the priestess of Artemis Pythie; inscriptions testify the performance of mystery rituals and initiations (τελεταί), which seem to have formed a significant element of the cult of Apollo and Artemis at Didyma.[47] Even more significantly, we know from epigraphic evidence that some of the visitors at the Oracle of Claros were initiated into a mystery rite, apparently

[43] Brisson (2004), 60–61.

[44] Porphyry, *Plot.* 15.2–6, ed. Armstrong (1966); trs. Edwards (2000a). Cited in Chapter 1, pp. 15–16 and n. 74.

[45] Plato, *Phdr.* 244a–245a. Cf. Edwards (2000a), 26, n. 145.

[46] Plutarch, *De Is.* 354c. Cf. 352b; 354d–f; 355b–c; 360f.

[47] Fontenrose (1988), 125–130; Busine (2005), 193.

as a preliminary to their consultation of the Oracle.[48] Some epigraphical evidence from client cities of Claros shows that individuals and civic delegations consulted the Oracle at Claros and, at the same time, were initiated into mystery rites. For example, a citizen from Charax in Asia Minor 'gathered in the oracles and was initiated' (ἔλαβε χρησμοὺς καὶ ἐμυήθη),[49] while the delegates of the city of Neocaesarea in Asia Minor 'consulted the oracle after having been initiated and introduced [into the temple]' (μυηθέντες καὶ ἐνβατεύσαντες ἐχρήσαντο).[50] Other enquirers to the Oracle at Claros from cities all over Asia Minor are known to have been initiated into the mystery rites at Claros.[51] An inscription referring to a delegation from Amaseia attests to the initiation of five young people, an unusual occurrence.[52] The introduction to the Oracle at Claros engraved at Pergamon also testifies that the delegates meditated on the divine lines after having been initiated and introduced into the temple.[53] It is difficult to deduce exactly what occurred during these mystery rituals at Claros, but it seems as though the enquirers who were initiated followed the winding labyrinth situated under the temple which lead to the *adyton*, after having 'crossed the threshold' (ἐμβατεύειν).[54] Intriguingly, connections between oracular sanctuaries and mystery cults may have been present much earlier: Bonnechere has presented a convincing case for close and extensive links from the Classical period onwards between the Oracle of Trophonios in Boeotia and mystery cults (both in terms of the respective rites and the nature of revelation).[55]

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[48] Lane Fox (1986), 173; Picard (1922a), 303–304, lists seven inscriptions which refer to delegations to the oracle being initiated into the mysteries: Texts 3, 4, 5 and 7 report 'mysteries' (μυστήρια) only; 1 (μυηθέντες ἐνεβάτευσαν), 2 (μυηθέντες καὶ ἐνβατεύσαντες ἐχρήσαντο) and 6 (τὰ μυστήρια ἐνεβάτευσεν) mention 'mysteries' before 'entry'. Cf. also West (1983), 169, on child initiates (with Text 7 above).

[49] Cf. Papazoglou (1988), 216, 2.13–18 (this inscription is dated to A.D. 149/150); Busine (2005), 193.

[50] Macridy (1905), 165, n. 2; Busine (2005), 193.

[51] Lappa: θεοπρόπος᾽Ανδρικὸς᾽Αλεξάνδρου παραλ[αβ]ὼν τὰ μυστήρι[α] ἐνεβάτευσεν (cf. Macridy (1912), 46, no. 2, 5–7; Stobi: ἐπ]ετέλεσε καὶ μυστήρια (cf. Macridy [1912] 52, no. 20, 12); Odessa: ἐπε]τέλεσε καὶ μυστήρια (cf. Macridy [1912], 51, no. 16, 13); Dionysopolis: ἐπετέλε[σε] καὶ μυστήρια (cf. Macridy [1912], 50, no.15, 11–12); Amisos: οἵτινες μυηθέντες ἐνεβάτευσαν (Cf. Macridy [1905] 170, n. V 4, 15). Cf. Busine (2005), 193–194, n. 151.

[52] Cf. Picard (1922a), 206, n. 6; 217 n. 12; 303–304; Picard (1922b), 192; Busine (2005), 194, n. 152. The initiation of children and young people into mystery cults in Antiquity: West (1983), 168–169; Lane Fox (1986), 184.

[53] *I. Pergamon* 324, I.4–6: μυ]ηθέντες καὶ ἐμβα [τεύσαντες ἐχρήσαντο καὶ παρέλαβον τ]ὸν ὑπογεγραμμένον [-]αιον χρησμόν, ed. Habicht (1969). Cf. Busine (2005), 194, n. 153.

[54] Busine (2005), 194.

[55] Bonnechere (1998), 436–480; (2003), 169–192.

Additionally, many oracles attributed to Apollo attested in literary sources from the Late Antique period echo Porphyry's injunction not to reveal the contents of his work on oracles to the profane and uninitiated. For example, an oracle quoted by Cornelius Labeo (who may have been contemporary with Porphyry) in his work, *On the Oracle of Apollo of Claros*, begins by explaining, 'Those who have learned the mysteries should hide the unsearchable secrets ...' (v. 1: ὄργια μὲν δεδαῶτας ἐχρῆν νηπευθέα κεύθειν).[56] In an oracle contained within the late Christian compilation of pagan oracles, the *Theosophy* (which includes some oracles from Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*), Apollo admonishes an enquirer for the audacity of his question, 'You look for a privilege equal to that of the gods; that is not permitted to you' (ἰσόθεον δίζῃ γέρας εὑρέμεν· οὔ σοι ἐφικτόν).[57] In another oracle, Apollo asserts that 'It is difficult for the eyes of mortals to contemplate the immortal nature, unless this person receives a divine sign' (θνητοῖς γὰρ χαλεπὸν φύσιν ἄμβροτον ὀφθαλμοῖσιν εἰσιδέειν, ἢν μή τις ἔχῃ σύνθημα θέειον).[58]

Thus, the parallel between oracular revelation and knowledge with revelation through mystery rituals seems to have gained a widespread currency by the Late Antique period. The underlying idea that divine insight and truth can only be granted to the initiated is endorsed by oracular sanctuaries themselves as well as by Porphyry and other Platonist philosophers, suggesting a widespread view which linked divine knowledge and insight with ideas of initiation and cultic secrecy. This network of associations suggests the ritualistic framework and understanding of oracles: oracles were seen as a ritual, like a mystery rite, which bestowed insight upon those ready to receive it (the initiated), thus connecting them with the divine world.

Oracles and Allegory

Porphyry's Oracles and Allegorical Exegesis

Within the prologue of the *Philosophy from Oracles*, Porphyry also describes oracles as 'enigmas'.[59] This seems to indicate a parallel between the nature of oracles and allegory, often referred to by the Greek term αἴνιγμα (literally meaning 'enigma, riddle') and its derivatives.[60] Allegory is a subject much discussed and used by

[56] Cornelius Labeo, F18 (Mastandrea) = Macrob. *Sat.* 1.18.20. Cf. Busine (2005), 211.

[57] *Theosophy* I.40 (Beatrice), 2 in Busine (2005), 211.

[58] *Theosophy* I 40 (Beatrice), 5–6 in Busine (2005), 211.

[59] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 305F, line 3 = *PE* 4.8.2.

[60] The parallels between the interpretation of diviners and allegorists, in the sense that both decode *ainigmata*, has been discussed by Struck (2002), 125–126; (2004); (2005a), to

Porphyry, who was one of the key philosophers to develop and utilise allegorical exegesis for the interpretation of mythological narratives. His extant treatise *De antro nympharum* (*On the Cave of the Nymphs*) comprises a highly developed allegorical 'reading' of Homer's *Odyssey*, 13.96–112.[61] Although the allegorical method had been used to interpret literary works, particularly the Homeric poems, since at least the fifth century B.C., Porphyry's treatise is one of the first extensive works of allegorical exegesis extant from Antiquity; indeed it is the single extant largely complete essay comprising an allegorical explication of a Homeric text.[62]

Allegory

Before examining the parallels between oracles and allegory, it is important to examine the nature of allegory and allegorical exegesis.[63] The word 'allegory' is derived from the Greek terms ἄλλος, meaning 'other', and ἀγορία (from the Greek verb, ἀγοράομαι, 'to speak, utter'), meaning 'speaking'.[64] As we have seen above, the most common Greek term applied to allegory is αἴνιγμα and its derivatives, meaning 'enigma, riddle'. Allegory, or 'other-speaking', is a mode of expression where a hidden, second meaning, or a set of multiple hidden meanings, is considered to underlie the literal, surface meaning of a text.[65] This hidden, second meaning (or set of multiple meanings), commonly referred to as ὑπόνοια, was thought to transcend the surface meaning of the text and to thus reveal the

whom I am indebted in the following discussion. Cf. also Brisson (2004), 56.

[61] Porphyry, *De antr. nymph.* ed. Nauck (1886). All quotations of this work are from this edition. Eng. trs.: Text with translation by Seminar Classics 609, State University of New York at Buffalo (1969). All translations of this work are from this edition. Lamberton (1986), 108–114, provides a comprehensive summary of scholarship on the problematic issue of dating this work.

[62] Lamberton (1986), 108, 120; Struck (2004), 22–23. In the fifth century B.C., Anaxagoras, Metrodorus of Lampsacus and Diogenes of Apollonia employed the allegorical method. Tate (1929), 142–143, suggests that pre-Socratic philosophers may have been the first to interpret poetry in an allegorical manner. Parmenides wrote his poem in the form of allegorical verse because he considered it the natural medium for the expression of philosophical truth: Tate (1934), 106.

[63] This section is intended to be a summary rather than comprehensive. Allegory in Antiquity: Steinmetz (1986), 18–30; Whitman (1987); Most (1989), 2014–2065; (1997), 117–135; Dawson (1992); Long (1992), 41–66. The allegorical tradition within Neoplatonism: Coulter (1976); Lamberton (1986); Brisson (2004); Struck (2004); (2005a); Manolea (2004), 40–42; Sheppard (1980); Kuisma (2009), 160–173. The Homeric tradition in Syrianus, Ammonius and Asclepius: Manolea (2004); (2009), 174–187.

[64] Dawson (1992), 3.

[65] Adams Lemming and Morgan Drowne (1996), vii; Rollinson (1981), 3. Fletcher (1968), 41.

author's conscious purpose.[66] This assumes that allegory has a structural reality within the text or, in other words, that the author has consciously structured the text so as to produce and include multiple levels of meaning. Thus an allegory is different from a metaphor, although both are symbolic modes of expression. A metaphor is a comparison, which is employed to clarify and visualise an image presented in the literal, 'surface' meaning of a text. An allegory, on the other hand, is an encoded level of truth embedded within the text as an underlying, hidden meaning. However, an allegory could be viewed as being composed of metaphors.[67] An allegory uses a series of 'symbols' (σύμβολα), analogies, or metaphors, as a 'code' for the hidden meaning, which one has to decode in order to elucidate the 'true meaning' of a text. Ancient writers make little, if any, distinction between allegory, in the sense of an allegorical text or composition thought to contain multiple levels of meaning, and allegorical exegesis, the work of critics and philosophers who 'uncover' and interpret these multiple levels of meaning.[68]

The hidden meaning which ancient allegorists 'decode' from texts is often connected with the nature of the gods and the cosmos, the place of the human soul within the cosmos and other fundamental truths about the world.[69] This is particularly the case within Neoplatonism: as Lamberton states, 'the chief aspects of the Neoplatonic tradition of interpretation as passed on to the Middle Ages are the ideas (1) that Homer was a sage who was acquainted with the fate of souls, and (2) that the model of the universe he articulated was characterised by an idealism compatible with the thought of Plotinus and the later Neoplatonists'.[70] The idea that Homer was a philosophical sage with special knowledge of the gods is reflected in Porphyry's use of the term θεολόγος, meaning both 'poet' (sometimes with the suggestion that allegorical mystical or cosmological poetry is meant) and 'interpreter of poetry', to describe Homer; he also uses this term to describe other archaic poets and legendary and historical philosophical figures such as Pythagoras, Orpheus, Empedocles and Plato, with the implication that they too wrote allegorically, encoding hidden meanings within their works.[71]

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[66] Liddell and Scott (1843; repr. 1996), s.v. ὑπόνοια; Coulter (1976), 19–20; Fletcher (1968), 41; Tate (1929), 145; Rollinson (1981), 3; Lamberton (1986), 20–21.

[67] Dawson (1992), 5–6, argues that the chief difference between metaphor and allegory is the *narrative* element of allegory while a metaphor is 'a trope that makes an implied analogy' (5). However he emphasises that an allegory is composed of metaphors.

[68] Lamberton (1986), 20–21; Whitman (1987); Dawson (1992), 4; 245, n. 12.

[69] Lamberton (1986), 21–22; Brisson (2004), 83; 85–86.

[70] Lamberton (1986), 43. Cf. also Pépin (1966), 235; Struck (2002), 125.

[71] Porphyry uses the term θεολόγος eight times in *De antr. nymph.*: he uses the singular term to refer specifically to Homer (78.15–16) and to Orpheus (68.6); he uses the term in the plural at 61.5; 66.24; 77.22, in an abstract sense which could refer to any poets, interpreters of poetry or philosophers. 71.17 seems to include Homer, on the evidence of Numenius F35; 62.10 refers to the unknown author of a hymn to Apollo as well as Pythagoras, Empedocles

Within the Neoplatonic tradition more generally, Hesiod was also regarded as a θεολόγος, who encoded mystical truths into his poetic works.[72] Within *De antro nympharum*, Porphyry appeals to the whole of the Hellenic tradition, using many different figures because, as far as he was concerned, all of these thinkers belonged to one consistent spiritual tradition which, for more than a thousand years, gave answers, in many different ways, to the same questions.[73]

Neoplatonist philosophers such as Porphyry could have pointed to the connection between Homeric verses and divination which appears in Plato's *Crito* 44b, where Socrates in prison awaiting execution tells Crito that he dreamed of a beautiful woman dressed in white who called him and addressed him with a Homeric verse: 'on the third day you will come to fertile Phthia' from *Iliad* 9.363. This is a dramatic device which connects Socrates with Achilles who had a choice between death with *kleos* or an escape in Thessaly to Phthia. Socrates could also have chosen to escape to Thessaly; choice between death or escape is one of the central themes of this dialogue.[74] In this sense, Socrates' dream could be seen as a divinatory or prophetic dream.

This tradition of viewing Homer as a wise sage and a seer clearly has its roots in traditional Greek culture, where the claim that poets, particularly Homer, had a special status and relationship with divinity had a long history. For example, an aphorism found in school texts stated that 'Homer was no man, but a god' (θεός, οὐκ ἄνθρωπος ὁ Ὅμηρος).[75] Several places especially honoured Homer as semi-divine such as Chios, which claimed to be his birthplace, and the inhabitants of Argos apparently offered sacrifices to Homer along with Apollo.[76] Alexandria had a temple dedicated by Ptolemy IV Philopater to Homer, called the

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and Plato; 76.23 is difficult to identify, but the Buffalo editors suggest Pherecydes, F B6 D–K. Cf. Lamberton (1986), 29, n. 88, 30.

[72] Aristotle, *Met.* 1000a9–10, trs. Tredennick (1933; repr. 1961), already used the term θεολόγος for poets such as Hesiod, following up on Plato (*Rep*. 379a5, trs. Shorey (1930; repr. 1982), Vol. 1: θεολογία, or speech about the gods by the poets), a usage which would have set the precedent for the Neoplatonists. Hermias, *In Phaedrum* 82.12–13 (eds. Lucarini and Moreschini, 2012), refers to 'the theologians and the inspired poets and Homer' (... τοὺς θεολόγους καὶ τοὺς ἔνθους ποιητὰς καὶ Ὅμηρον). Cf. Manolea (2004), 149–150. At *In Phaedrum* 153.5–11, Hermias distinguishes Homer, Orpheus, Hesiod and Musaeus from the poets who are third in the rank of truth. Cf. Manolea (2004), 178–183. *In Phaedrum* 127.31–33 is also important, referring to Homer, Orpheus and Parmenides as ἔνθεοι ποιητές. Cf. Manolea (2004), 164–167; Lamberton (1986), 30–31.

[73] Maurette (2005), 64.

[74] Plato, *Cri.* 44b; cf. Karanika (2011), 257.

[75] *O.Mich* 1100.10–11 (third century A.D.) (=Youtie and Winter [1951], 206).

[76] Aelian, *Varia Historia* 9.15, trs. Wilson (1997).

Homereion.[77] Moreover, poetry and prophecy were constantly linked in Graeco-Roman Antiquity (discussed below).

The conception of allegorical exegesis, as employed by Porphyry, is based upon the notion of universal, absolute truth. The search for a second level of meaning, or multiple meanings, within a text implicitly assumes the notion that there is an 'abstract' layer of truth embedded within the text. This is the fundamental basis of allegorical exegesis and the reason why Plato has been referred to as 'the father of allegory'.[78] The method of allegorical interpretation is analogous to the thought process inherent within the Platonic theory of Forms (i.e. the idea of discovering the 'essence' or 'truth' of a thing).[79] Thus, allegorical exegesis was a particularly fitting method to be used within a Neoplatonic context, since the idea of 'truth' as distinct from material phenomena while simultaneously informing such phenomena, as expounded in the Platonic theory of Forms, was a fundamental principle of Neoplatonism, and lies at the heart of all Neoplatonic philosophy and metaphysics.[80]

Methodological Issues and the Purpose of Allegorical Exegesis

How does one know when it is appropriate to read a text 'allegorically' and which sections of the text are appropriate for allegorical exegesis? Porphyry's position on the 'enigmas' or 'riddles' codified within mythological texts which he regards as needing allegorical interpretation is summarised in relation to Homeric text in an extant fragment of his lost treatise, *The Styx* (Περὶ Στυγός):

> Ἔστι δὲ ἡ τοῦ ποιητοῦ δόξα οὐχ ὡς ἄν τις νομίσειεν εὔληπτος. πάντες μὲν γὰρ οἱ παλαιοὶ τὰ περὶ τῶν θεῶν καὶ δαιμόνων δι' αἰνιγμάτων ἐσήμηναν, Ὅμηρος δὲ καὶ μᾶλλον τὰ περὶ τούτων ἀπέκρυψε τῷ μὴ προηγουμένως περὶ αὐτῶν διαλέγεσθαι, καταχρῆσθαι δὲ τοῖς λεγομένοις εἰς παράστασιν ἄλλων.
>
> The poet's [i.e. Homer's] thought is not, as one might think, easily grasped, for all the ancients expressed matters concerning the gods and *daimones* through riddles (δι' αἰνιγμάτων), but Homer went to even greater lengths to keep these things

[77] Aelian, *Varia Historia* 13.22. Cf. Fraser (1972), v.ii.862, n. 423; Schwendner (2002), 108.

[78] Despite Plato's apparent condemnation of poets in *Republic* 10, a controversial and much-debated subject, the network of conceptions underlying allegorical exegesis is clearly dependent on the Platonic theory of Forms and related metaphysical notions. Cf. Coulter (1976), 7; 19–20; 27.

[79] Fletcher (1968), 42.

[80] Lamberton (1999), 317.

> hidden and refrained from speaking of them directly but rather used those things he did say to reveal other things beyond their obvious meanings.[81]

The 'enigmas' within a mythological text need to be decoded and underlie the 'obvious meaning' of the poetic text. The passage indicates Porphyry's stance on the widespread nature of allegorical texts: 'all the ancients' (πάντες οἱ παλαιοὶ) used allegory to codify their text, especially when they discuss gods and *daimones*. A Porphyrian fragment (cited by Stobaeus without any indication of which of Porphyry's lost works may have contained it) offers an allegorical interpretation of Homer's *Odyssey* 10.239–40, the episode in which Circe transforms Odysseus' men into pigs. At the beginning of this fragment, Porphyry states 'Clearly this myth is a riddle concealing what Pythagoras and Plato have said about the soul' (ἔστι τοίνυν ὁ μῦθος αἴνιγμα τῶν περὶ ψυχῆς ὑπό τε Πυθαγόρου λεγομένων καὶ Πλάτωνος ...).[82] Here we see a view of the Homeric text as an 'enigma' with a more profound, hidden meaning than the literal, surface meaning; this hidden meaning, which apparently involves a Platonic and Pythagorean teaching on the nature of souls and their embodiment, needs decoding in order to be fully understood.

In *De antro nympharum*, Porphyry further comments on these important methodological issues. He questions Homer's inclusion of unusual details in this passage, asserting that if it were merely a descriptive technique or a case of 'poetic licence', then many of the details would be purely arbitrary. Rather, Porphyry states, the 'obscurities' (ἀσαφειῶν) and unusual details signify to the reader that the passage should be interpreted allegorically.[83] He further qualifies this assertion by implying that such details must be unusual or incongruent within the story's contextual setting and cultural background.[84] Thus, Porphyry implies that when an author includes elements in his narrative which are absurd, fantastical or unusual, these show in high relief the underlying allegory. This notion of method seems common among Neoplatonist philosophers and pagan intellectuals in Late Antiquity. The emperor Julian would later endorse the same methodological approach, citing 'paradox' (παραδόξου) and 'incongruity' (ἀπεμφαίνοντος) as key signposts of allegorical meaning and the need for allegorical interpretation of

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[81] Porphyry, *The Styx* 372F (Smith), lines 1–7, following Lamberton's emendations: (1986), 113 = Stobaeus, 2.1.32, trs. Lamberton (1986), 113.

[82] Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 1.41.60 in Lamberton (1986), 115–117.

[83] Porphyry, *De antr. nymph.* 3 (Nauck 57.6–11); 4 (Nauck 57.17–21).

[84] Porphyry, *De antr. nymph.* 3–4. As an example of this qualification, Porphyry cites the orientation of the entrances at the north and south of the cave (3; Nauck 57.4–17). If the entrances were located in the east and west of the cave, following the traditional orientation of a Classical Greek temple, then this detail would be much more understandable, given its contextual and cultural setting.

a myth.[85] Julian explicitly states that the reason that truth is hidden within myth is to teach humans to rely on their own intelligence and to question philosophically, rather than simply relying on the opinions of others.[86] Porphyry implies that he agrees with this motivation for allegorisation:

> ...ἡμᾶς μετ' ἐκείνων τε καὶ τὰ καθ' ἑαυτοὺς πειρᾶσθαι νῦν ἀνευρίσκειν.
>
> ...we on our part must now, with their help and *by our own efforts*, attempt to find the explanation [my emphasis].[87]

Sallustius also postulates 'strangeness' (ἀτοπία) as an indicator for the necessity of employing the allegorical method when interpreting mythological narratives; he further echoes Julian's reason for the allegorisation of myth: to compel people to think for themselves and study philosophy.[88] He also claims that hiding philosophical truth within an enigmatic story prevents the foolish, the 'profane', from despising and misinterpreting philosophy through their lack of understanding.[89] Porphyry himself states this rationale for hiding truth in enigmas in an introductory fragment of his treatise, *On Statues*:

> φθέγξομαι οἷς θέμις ἐστί, θύρας δ' ἐπίθεσθε βέβηλοι, σοφίας θεολόγου νοήματα δεικνύς, οἷς τὸν θεὸν καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ τὰς δυνάμεις διὰ εἰκόνων συμφύλων αἰσθήσει ἐμήνυσαν ἄνδρες, τὰ ἀφανῆ φανεροῖς ἀποτυπώσαντες πλάσμασιν, τοῖς καθάπερ ἐκ βίβλων τῶν ἀγαλμάτων ἀναλέγειν τὰ περὶ θεῶν μεμαθηκόσι γράμματα. θαυμαστὸν δὲ οὐδὲν ξύλα καὶ λίθους ἡγεῖσθαι τὰ ξόανα τοὺς ἀμαθεστάτους, καθὰ δὴ καὶ τῶν γραμμάτων οἱ ἀνόητοι λίθους μὲν ὁρῶσι τὰς στήλας, ξύλα δὲ τὰς δέλτους, ἐξυφασμένην δὲ πάπυρον τὰς βίβλους.
>
> I speak to those who lawfully may hear: Depart all ye profane and close the doors. The thoughts of a wise theology, wherein men indicated god and god's powers by images akin to sense, and sketched invisible things in visible forms, I will show to those who have learned to read from the statues as from books the things there written concerning the gods. Nor is it any wonder that the utterly unlearned regard the statues as wood and stone, just as also those who do not understand

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85 Julian, *Or.* 5, 170a3–4, 7–10, trs. Wright (1913; repr. 1996).
86 Julian, *Or.* 5, 170b6–c3.
87 Porphyry, *De antr. nymph.* 4 (Nauck 57.23–24).
88 Sallustius, *De Diis* 3.17–20, ed. Nock (1926).
89 Sallustius, *De Diis* 3.11–15. Cf. also Macrobius, *In Somn.* 1.2.17–18.

> the written letters look upon the monuments as mere stones, and on the tablets as bits of wood, and on books as woven papyrus.[90]

Porphyry argues that statues of the gods have to be 'read' to gain their hidden meaning and decoded because they are enigmas. Again, we see a parallel with mystery cults: the first two lines are the words which were traditionally spoken by the hierophant at the Eleusinian greater mysteries. This passage demonstrates that, for Porphyry, cult statues share the enigmatic quality of both mythological texts and oracles.[91] Here we see Porphyry's equation of the hidden truths encoded within statues, texts and oracles: all need to be decoded in order to read the 'invisible things' hidden within. Such decoding requires knowledge and learning; the profane are those who are 'utterly unlearned' (τοὺς ἀμαθεστάτους) and therefore have not developed the capacity to decode statues, texts and oracles so as to see their deeper meanings. Thus, Porphyry's injunctions in the prologue of the *Philosophy from Oracles* become clearer: the 'profane' should not be allowed access to the oracle collection because they have not developed the capacity to decode enigmas properly and so will misconstrue and misinterpret the meaning of the oracles.[92]

Oracles and Allegory as Encoded Receptacles of Divine Truth; Initiation and Secrecy

For Porphyry, oracles and mythological texts both used mythical language and expression to subtly allude to a deeper level of divine truth and knowledge, while simultaneously concealing it from those who were ignorant and profane. Thus, both oracles and mythological texts contain multiple levels of meaning and thus have an enigmatic nature. For those who knew how to 'read' these signs of the gods, a deeper level of divine truth and philosophical vision could be gained through the contemplation of these oracles and mythological narratives.[93] Porphyry's characterisation of oracles as the transmission of messages from the gods through 'enigmas' or riddles (δι' αἰνιγμάτων) clearly shows his conception of oracles and mythological narratives as 'signs' of the divine. They are encoded receptacles of divine truth, whose enigmatic, multi-layered meaning is not easily grasped and requires thought and contemplation on the part of the reader in order to 'decode' the hidden meaning. Sallustius, a writer deeply influenced by Neoplatonism, would later write:

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[90] Porphyry, *De Stat.* 351F (Smith), lines 14–24 = *PE* 3.7.1; trs. Gifford (1903; repr. 1981).

[91] Lamberton (1999), 317.

[92] Cf. Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 304F = *PE* 4.7.2–8.1; 305F = *PE* 4.8.2. Cf. also Porphyry, *Marc.* 15; Brisson (2004) 56; Johnson (2009), 113.

[93] Cf. Struck (2005a), 150.

> ὅτι μὲν οὖν θεῖοι οἱ μῦθοι, ἐκ τῶν χρησαμένων ἔστιν εἰπεῖν· καὶ γὰρ τῶν ποιητῶν οἱ θεόληπτοι καὶ τῶν φιλοσόφων οἱ ἄριστοι οἵ τε τὰς τελετὰς καταδείξαντες καὶ αὐτοὶ δὲ ἐν χρησμοῖς οἱ θεοὶ μύθοις ἐχρήσαντο.
>
> Consideration of those who have employed myths justifies us in saying that myths are divine; for indeed the inspired among poets, and the best of philosophers, and the founders of solemn rites, and *the gods themselves in oracles*, *have employed myths* [my emphasis].[94]

This model of 'deeper reading' and philosophical interpretation is clearly based on ancient models of initiation and secrecy. As discussed above, just as the initiate of the Eleusinian mysteries underwent levels of initiation in order to attain a divine vision, so those who read oracles in the correct manner (i.e. allegorically and philosophically) also undergo a type of symbolic 'initiation' in order to gain knowledge and vision of divine truth and wisdom.

Why did Porphyry conceive of oracles and mythological narratives as having such a similar enigmatic nature? Firstly, his conception of oracles in this instance is based on traditional Greek conceptions of the nature of divine communication and language. The idea that divine utterance is subtle, allusive and given through 'signs' which require debate and often a highly developed interpretation in order to fully understand their meaning, can be seen throughout Antiquity.[95] According to the Greeks, the gods are immortal and separate from human affairs, yet through oracles they communicate with mortals in mortal language; thus, it is only to be expected that their communications may be shadowy, allusive and enigmatic. Again, the notion that the understanding of humans is feeble in comparison with that of the gods was a common notion throughout Antiquity; as was the notion that humans often misunderstand and misinterpret oracular utterances received from the gods.

In characterising oracles as αἰνίγματα, Porphyry was drawing on a long tradition of the characterisation of oracles, which stems at least from Archaic

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[94] Sallustius, *De Diis.* 3.21–24.

[95] Cf. Heraclitus, F93, ed. Kirk, Raven and Schofield (1957; repr. 1983): 'The lord whose oracle is in Delphi neither speaks out nor conceals, but gives a sign' (ὁ ἄναξ οὗ τὸ μαντεῖόν ἐστι τὸ ἐν Δελφοῖς οὔτε λέγει οὔτε κρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει); Iamblichus, *Letter* 5.6–16, on oracles leading people towards dialectical enquiry, in order to uncover their full meaning; Bowden (2005), 6, maintains that the crucial moment of receiving an oracle was not the actual consultation, since the exact meaning of the oracular response would have always been debated; Parker (2000), 76–108, notes that Delphic oracles regularly triggered debates in the Athenian assembly in the Classical period; Graf (2005), 53, maintains that oracles also triggered debates in Rome, examining a range of specific examples.

and Classical Antiquity.[96] Pindar uses the term to describe the prophecies of the seer Amphiaraus, while Herodotus suggests that a dream speaks in riddles.[97] Aristophanes states that an oracle speaks enigmatically.[98] In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, the pronouncements of the prophetess Cassandra are called enigmas.[99] Furthermore, Plato asserts that it is the task of the interpreter of oracles *to solve* their enigmas, a point which has clearly been developed by Porphyry in his prologue to the *Philosophy from Oracles*, where he posits the necessity of interpreting the oracles of the gods.[100] In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates refers to the Delphic Oracle which named him as the wisest of men and frequently maintains that the oracle must have spoken in an αἴνιγμα. He then describes his subsequent search for its true meaning; here we see Socrates acting as the philosophical interpreter *par excellence* of oracular utterance.[101]

Another contributing factor towards the similar enigmatic nature of oracular and poetic texts is their metrical and linguistic modes of expression. Struck points out that both allegorists and oracle-readers read texts that follow the same metrical constraints. Ancient allegorists typically analysed epic poetry and other texts written in hexameters, such as those of Homer, Hesiod and Orpheus. Oracles were also often written in hexameters and utilise poetic, mythological language. Parmenides' poem, an 'allegorical' and symbolic expression of philosophical ideas, was also written in hexameter verse. As Struck notes, 'hexameter was most strongly marked as the language of the oracle and of the epic poet'.[102]

Poetry and prophecy were consistently linked with each other throughout Antiquity. Both the poet and the prophet (μάντις) were considered to be divinely inspired by the gods. Plato explicitly compares poetic and prophetic madness in the *Phaedrus*, asserting their superiority to human sanity and discursive rationality.[103] In the *Ion*, Plato develops a sustained and explicit comparison of the poet and the prophet, claiming that both, when they are divinely inspired, are not using their own mind or senses; rather, they are wholly possessed by the god, who ultimately causes the inspiration.[104]

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96 Cf. especially Struck (2005a), 156–164.

97 Pindar, *Pythian Odes* 8.40; Herodotus, 5.56.

98 Aristophanes, *Equites* 196.

99 Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1112; 1183.

100 Plato, *Ti.* 72b.

101 Plato, *Ap.* 21b; 27a; 27d.

102 Struck (2005a), 150–151.

103 Plato, *Phdr.* 244d2–6 (cited at Chapter 7, p. 242). Cf. also *Phdr.* 244a8–b3; Struck (2005a),151.

104 Plato, *Ion* 534c–d. Cf. Chapter 7, pp. 242–243; Murray (1996), 118–121, who ascribes irony to Plato's treatment of poets in this work: even if we take seriously the idea that poets are divinely inspired, that inspiration is limited because it deprives poets of all understanding. Yet, at the very least, Plato plays on the close association between poetry and prophecy here.

Oracles, Allegory and the Example of the Cave

Furthermore, the conception of a mythological text (including oracular responses) containing multiple levels of meaning is also based on several metaphysical conceptions inherent within the Platonic tradition. For example, Platonic philosophers, from Plato to Proclus, conceived of the universe as having a hierarchical, multi-layered structure. Later Neoplatonists such as Proclus seem to have developed this metaphysical hierarchical structure to a very complex level; however, Plato had posited a hierarchical view of reality as consisting of the intelligible world and the sensible world.

In order to demonstrate the way in which, to Porphyry, both oracles and allegory depend upon Platonic conceptions, the example of Porphyry's interpretation of the cave in *De antro nympharum* may help to clarify the method of allegorical exegesis and its foundations in Platonic philosophy. Porphyry maintains that the cave is a symbol of the generated, sensible cosmos and a symbol of matter:

> ἄντρα μὲν δὴ ἐπιεικῶς οἱ παλαιοὶ καὶ σπήλαια τῷ κόσμῳ καθιέρουν καθ' ὅλον τε αὐτὸν καὶ κατὰ μέρη λαμβάνοντες, σύμβολον μὲν τῆς ὕλης ἐξ ἧς ὁ κόσμος, τὴν γῆν παραδιδόντες... τὸν δὲ ἐκ τῆς ὕλης γινόμενον κόσμον διὰ τῶν ἄντρων παριστάντες...
>
> The ancients, then, very properly consecrated caves and grottoes to the cosmos taken as a whole and in its parts, making earth a symbol of the matter which constitutes the cosmos .... while representing the cosmos which is generated from matter by means of caves ...[105]

Porphyry explains that caves are a symbol of the sensible cosmos since they are formed from stone and rock, which symbolise raw, physical matter because of their inert, formless qualities. The stone and rock form a hollow (the cave), which Porphyry does not explain allegorically, although the implication may be that the space and lack of form of the hollow gap represents the physical cosmos as a lower ontological grade, lacking Being and reality in comparison with the intelligible realm.[106] Furthermore, the cave is a specific form imposed on stone, just as the cosmos is comprised of form imposed on matter. Darkness, mistiness and humidity, common features of caves, are akin to the flux of matter, the raw

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[105] Porphyry, *De antr. nymph.* 5 (Nauck 59.1–4; 5–7).

[106] Lamberton (1986), 124 and n. 118, points out that much of the necessary interpretation which should lie between the philological-historical discussion and the assertion that the passage 'hints at' a reality which Homer refused to express directly is missing. He suggests an oral context for much of the methodology of Porphyry's exegesis, based on the discussions held in Plotinus' circle (*Plot*. 14.10–14).

material of the sensible cosmos.[107] This description strongly recalls the allegory of the cave in Plato's *Republic*, where the cave is used as a symbol of the cosmos which human beings inhabit.[108] Plato's myth of the cave advances the notion that, through the 'purification' and practice of philosophy, human beings have the potential to ascend from the 'cave', the physical cosmos, to the intelligible, eternal realms. Similarly, in Porphyry's treatise, human souls have the potential to ascend as 'immortals'. Porphyry himself refers to Plato's myth of the cave, as well as asserting that the Pythagoreans and Empedocles called the cosmos a cave.[109] Scholars have noted that Porphyry also gives a description of what could be an actual *Mithraeum*,[110] since he states:

> ...εἰκόνα φέροντος αὔτῳ τοῦ σπηλαίου τοῦ κόσμου, ὃν ὁ Μίθρας ἐδημιούργησε, τῶν δ' ἐντὸς κατὰ συμμέτρους ἀποστάσεις σύμβολα φερόντων τῶν κοσμικῶν στοιχείων καὶ κλιμάτων·
>
> This cave bore for him the image of the Cosmos which Mithras had created and the things which the cave contained, by their proportionate arrangement, provided him with symbols of the elements and climates of the cosmos.[111]

As Maurette notes, archaeological evidence has shown that the Zodiac signs were depicted in many *Mithraea* and later on in the text Porphyry makes a long digression regarding the Zodiac and its symbolism (22–29), in relation to the soul's descent into the body and ascent from it.[112]

While claiming that the cave represents the sensible cosmos, Porphyry offers two other interpretations of the cave's symbolism, citing the idea that the ancients used the cave as a representation of 'all invisible powers' (πασῶν τῶν ἀοράτων δυνάμεων) and of 'the intelligible cosmos' (τοῦ νοητοῦ).[113] Porphyry explains that the cave represents the invisible powers and the intelligible cosmos because of its obscurity to the human senses due to its darkness and rockiness (akin to the Forms which cannot be perceived directly through the senses; direct apprehension using νοῦς is required to perceive the intelligible cosmos) and because of its solid form or essence (representing the higher ontological status and 'pure' essence of the intelligible realm).[114] Porphyry's three interpretations of the cave's symbolism have

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107 Porphyry, *De antr. nymph.* 5 (Nauck 59.6–60.1).
108 Plato, *Resp.* 7. 514a1–517a8, ed. and trs. Shorey (1935; repr. 1963), Vol. 2.
109 Porphyry, *De antr. nymph.* 8 (Nauck 61.17–62.8).
110 Cf. especially Campbell (1968), 55.
111 Porphyry, *De antr. nymph*. 6 (Nauck 60.8–11)
112 Porphyry's references to Mithraism in *De antr. nymph*: Maurette (2005), 63–81.
113 Porphyry, *De antr. nymph.* 7 (Nauck 60.23); 9 (Nauck 62.17).
114 Porphyry, *De antr. nymph*. 9 (Nauck 62.17–22).

been a focal point for modern critics, who have accused him of being contradictory and confused in his thinking at this point in the treatise.[115]

In response to such criticism, Pépin has suggested that a subtle method underlies Porphyry's presentation of the allegories, a 'calculated pluralism' building a cumulative interpretative statement with a coherence of its own.[116] Pépin sees this pluralism as 'calculated' because several of Porphyry's statements show that he was well aware that he is offering different allegorical interpretations; Porphyry states that the ancients reached these different interpretations of caves 'from different conceptions' (διαφόρων ἐννοιῶν).[117] Porphyry's cumulative statement regarding the cave's meaning states: '...the cave in question, because it contains, according to the poet, "waters that flow forever", could not bear a symbol of intelligible essence but of sensible substance' (... ὡς καὶ τὸ νῦν παραληφθὲν διὰ τὸ ἔχειν ὕδατα ἀενάοντα οὐκ ἂν εἴη τῆς νοητῆς ὑποστάσεως, ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐνύλου φέρον οὐσίας σύμβολον).[118] In this case, then, the cave represents the sensible cosmos, because of the flowing water within it and its mistiness and humidity. However, all three interpretations are nonetheless valid for allegorical interpretation in general: caves bear all three symbolic meanings, according to Porphyry, and so within a narrative, a cave could symbolise any or all of these three levels of reality.

Thus, the criticism that Porphyry's allegorical method is contradictory is problematic since it fails to understand the ideological and methodological basis of allegorical exegesis, as it was utilised within the Platonic tradition. The criticism is based on a linear mode of thinking with regard to allegorical exegesis, assuming that an allegorical symbol is allowed *only one* explanation in order to be valid. Thus, this criticism fails to take into account the multi-layered nature of allegorical exegesis, which itself is based on the idea of sympathy (συμπάθεια), the notion that truth is expressed in different ontological levels of reality in the way most appropriate to that level.[119] Hence, everything within the metaphysical universe is connected and the same 'meaning' or 'truth' can be expressed simultaneously on different ontological levels of reality. This conception of sympathy encapsulates and contains the microcosm–macrocosm idea which is so vital to allegory, in

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[115] Cf. Coulter (1976), 80, Pépin (1966), 241, and Lamberton (1986), 120–121, for discussion of modern criticism on this aspect of Porphyry's treatise.

[116] Pépin (1966), 241–246. Smith (2007), 13, comments on Porphyry's paratactic style of thinking which is seen particularly clearly in the *De antro nympharum*, where Porphyry discusses a number of differing allegorical interpretations sequentially but leaves the reader to make up his own mind.

[117] Porphyry, *De antr. nymph*. 9 (Nauck 62.12–13). Cf. Pépin (1966), 233, who also cites Porphyry, *De antr. nymph*. 15 (Nauck 66.24).

[118] Porphyry, *De antr. nymph*. 10 (Nauck 63.2–5).

[119] Cosmic sympathy (συμπάθεια): cf. Chapter 1, pp. 28–30; Proclus, *On the Sacred Art* 148.1–9; 150.1.

the sense that the 'microcosmic' text reflects the 'macrocosmic' cosmos. Thus, Neoplatonic allegorical exegesis is based upon the notion of sympathy, a concept which implies that all explanations as given by Porphyry are equally valid and the first explanation (cave as sensible cosmos) is linked with the second set of explanations (cave as invisible powers and intelligible cosmos). This is because for the Neoplatonists, the sensible cosmos is linked with the invisible powers of the cosmos, which inform it with intelligibility; the sensible cosmos is itself a reflection of the intelligible cosmos. Pépin seems to support this conception of Porphyrian allegory with his assertion that the three symbolic meanings of Porphyry's cave have a close relationship to the three kinds of qualities attributed to them: the cave represents the invisible powers because of its obscurity; the intelligible world is signified by the obscurity and the firmness of the rock because it is invisible and immutable; while the sensible world is symbolised by the obscurity, the firmness of the rock and the fluidity of the water.[120] The sensible world is symbolised by all three qualities because it arises from the invisible powers and the intelligible cosmos.

Lamberton points out that Porphyry's solution to the cave being described by two apparently contradictory adjectives in juxtaposition, 'murky' or 'misty' (ἠεροειδής) and 'lovely' (ἐπήρατος), also draws on the Neoplatonic model of perception.[121] This solution also helps to explain Porphyry's ascription of two levels of meaning to the cave. According to this model of perception, just as the human being exists on multiple levels (soul in all its complexity, and beyond soul, mind) so perception is possible on these different levels. As Lamberton states, from the perspective of one's everyday perceptions,

> the cave is 'lovely'; that is, to our normal fragmented perceptions, it offers the pleasing spectacle of form imposed on inert matter. We view it as participants in the flux and disorder of this world and by means of the senses, which themselves are bound to matter. It thus intimates a higher reality – that of form – and so gives us pleasure.[122]

At the same time, 'seen from the point of view of one who sees more deeply into it and penetrates it by the use of the mind', it is 'murky'. In other words, for the observer whose perspective is informed by the full realisation of νοῦς, the adjective will be appropriate because, being able to contemplate the Forms themselves, he will see in the cave not matter beautified by form but rather form obscured by matter. As Lamberton states:

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120 Pépin (1966), 244–245.

121 Porphyry, *De antr. nymph*. 3 (Nauck 56.12–3); Lamberton (1986), 126–127.

122 Lamberton (1986), 127.

> The multiple valid perspectives and modes of perception implied by such an epistemology are at the core of the Neoplatonists' perception of meaning in the literary artifact, as indeed in any other object in the universe, or in the universe itself. Porphyry's assertion of the existence of numerous valid possibilities in the interpretation of a single text is thus by no means evidence of a lack of clearly defined principles of interpretation, but rather a logical consequence of Neoplatonic psychology and epistemology.[123]

Thus, Porphyry's cave could be viewed as a symbol of mythological and oracular texts: all three (the cave, allegory and oracles) have a 'dark', 'hidden' and 'obscure' nature which is multi-layered. All three are said to require interpretation, contemplation and multiple levels of perception on the part of the reader. Porphyry's utilisation of allegory implicitly contains the idea that the cosmos is connected on all ontological levels of reality, since the idea of sympathy is inherent within this method of exegesis.

For Porphyry then, both oracles and mythological narratives are 'theophanies', in the sense that they reflect and display the metaphysical and hierarchical structure of the cosmos through their multiple levels of meaning and revelation. Oracles contain a profound and 'highest' level of meaning, divine truth, but they also display lower levels of meaning, and at their lowest level, a literal meaning. In this way, they reflect the hierarchical structure and composition of the cosmos itself.

Porphyry's purposes in writing the *Philosophy from Oracles* and the methods by which he advocated that one could derive 'philosophy' from 'oracles' thus becomes clearer. It is clear that the oracles included in his account were, generally speaking, to be interpreted in an allegorical manner. In this sense, they were considered to comprise a religious and mystical source of divine truth. Porphyry's ultimate purpose in recording and commenting upon oracles seems to have been to allow more people to access and understand this 'divine truth' and to gain the philosophical vision of divine truth through the 'theophanies' of the gods.

The Homeromanteia (Oracles of Homer)

Porphyry's connection between oracles and mythological texts which need to be interpreted allegorically, and his ascription of the status of αἰνίγματα to both, are reflected in contemporary Late Antique divinatory practices. We know of a form of oracular practice called *Homeromanteion* (pl. *Homeromanteia*), or the 'Oracle of Homer'.[124] This practice consisted of using *kuboi*, six-sided dice inscribed with

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[123] Lamberton (1986), 127.

[124] *P. Oxy*. LVI.3831 in Sirivianou (1989), 44–48; *P. Bon*. 3 = O. Montevecchi, *Papyri Bonnienses* I, 1–50 (Milan 1953); *PGM* VII.1–148, ed. Preisandanz (1928–31), Vol. 2. Cf.

numbers on their surfaces, to select a set of three numbers (by throwing the die three times or throwing three dice together) which was matched with specific quotations from Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, numbered and randomly arranged to make up a kind of divinatory text. We do not know how and why the specific lines of Homeric verse were chosen, but it seems significant that the vast majority come from direct speeches made by gods, heroes or heroines of the Homeric epics; moreover, many of the lines tend to be of a proverbial nature, possibly indicating that they were well-known.[125] Furthermore, the verbs in the quoted lines tend to be imperative (24 lines), optative (17 lines) and future (22 lines): optatives emphasise open-endedness and invite interpretation, while the use of the future tense seems to refer to ritual activity that is on-going at that very moment, as well as having a didactic aspect which is shared by imperatives.[126] In its use of dice to select a line of text which comprises the oracular response, the *Homeromanteion* is similar to other types of 'dice oracles', commonly used in Late Antiquity.[127] Dice oracles are particularly well-attested in Asia Minor (south-western Anatolia) from the second century A.D. onwards: archaeological remains have been found at several sanctuaries and within city marketplaces, including Pamphylia, Pisidia, Phrygia and Lycia.[128] At these oracular sites, inquirers would throw sets of *astragaloi* (dice or knucklebones) and then consult metrical inscriptions listing the interpretations of their throws.[129] The presiding gods of these oracular shrines were usually Apollo and Hermes.[130]

One version of the *Homeromanteion* is extant in the London papyrus, dated to the third, fourth or fifth century A.D., of the *Greek Magical Papyri*, *PGM* VII.1–148.[131] The procedure for consulting this Oracle of Homer involved the inquirer rolling three dice (or one die three times), each of which has six sides

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Betz (1986), 118–119; Maltomini (1995), 107–122; Karanika (2011), 255–277.

[125] Karanika (2011), 271–273, notes that of the 191 lines in *PGM* VII.1–148, 82 are from the *Odyssey* and 126 from the *Iliad* (some formulaic lines can be found in multiple places); furthermore, many of these lines have a long history of recontextualised presence in classical and post-classical authors such as Plutarch, Cassius Dio and others.

[126] Karanika (2011), 272–273.

[127] Dice oracles and kleromancy (lot divination): Plutarch, *De Pyth. or*. 407c; Pausanias, 7.25.10; Cicero, *Div.* 1.34; 2.85–87; Potter (1994), 26–27; Larson (1995), 347–350; Graf (2005), 51–97; Grotanelli (2005), 129–146; Karanika (2011), 264–266.

[128] Halliday (1913), 212–215; Lane Fox (1986), 209; Nollé (1987), 41–49; Potter (1994), 26–27; Graf (2005), 51–97 (including a list of the relevant epigraphic texts and a preliminary translation: 82–94). Pausanias, 7.25.10 records the use of a similar dice oracle of Hermes located in a cave in Bura, Achaea.

[129] Graf (2005), 60–65.

[130] Graf (2005), 73–74.

[131] *PGM* VII.1–148, ed. Preisandanz (1931), Vol. 2. For a date of the fourth or fifth century A.D. cf. Maltomini (1995), 107.

numbered one to six. The resulting three digit number was used to select a number and the corresponding line of Homeric verse comprises the oracular response.[132] For example, if a one and two threes were thrown, the answer would read: 'But Zeus does not accomplish for men all their purposes' (ἀλλ᾽ οὐ Ζεὺς ἄνδρεσσι νοήματα πάντα τελευτᾷ, *Iliad* 18.328).[133] Interestingly, the same throw in the *Homeromanteion* preserved in the Oxyrynchus papyri gives a different answer: 'I will face them; Pallas Athena will not let me flee' (ἀντιο(ν) ειμ᾽ αὐτ(ων)· τρειν μ᾽ουκ εα Παλλας Αθη(νη). *Iliad* 5.256).[134] This possibly indicates the existence of divergent versions of the *Homeromanteia* in Late Antiquity.

Another of the extant *Homeromanteion* texts (from Oxyrynchus), dated to the third or fourth century A.D., contains 216 lines of Homeric verse and gives instructions specifying the divinatory procedure used to consult the Oracle of Homer:[135]

> πρωτο(ν) μ(εν) ειδεναι σε δει τας ημερας αις
> χρησθαι τωι μαντ(ειωι) β ευχομ(εν)ο(ν) τ(ην) επωιδην
> ειπειν του θεου και ευξασθαι εν σεαυτωι πρ
> α βουλει τριτο(ν) λαβοντα το(ν) κυβ(ον) α(πο)ριψαι τρις
> και α(πο)ριψαντα πρ(ος) το(ν) αριθμο(ν) τ(ων) τριων τ
> κυβου χρηστηριαζεσθαι...κειται
>
> First, you must know the days on which to use the Oracle; second, you must pray and speak the incantation of the god and pray inwardly for what you want; third, you must take the die and throw it three times and having thrown consult the Oracle according to the number of the three (throws?) of the die, as it is composed.[136]

Presumably some creative interpretation on the part of the enquirer was required to match the line of Homer to their question or request: while this interpretation is not explicitly allegorical, it contains some similarities with that method of interpretation in the sense that the Homeric verse would probably not have been immediately applicable to the enquirer's situation, and some abstraction and

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[132] Betz (1986), 118–119; Karanika (2011), 258–260.

[133] *PGM* VII.15, ed. Preisendanz (1931); trs. H. Martin Jr. in H.D. Betz (1986), *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation including the Demotic Spells*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 112. ©1986, 1992 by the University of Chicago.

[134] Text as shown in *P. Oxy.* LVI. 3831.15, in Sirivianou (1989), 46; trs. Schwendner (2002),109.

[135] *P. Oxy*. LVI.3831 in Sirivianou (1989), 44–48. Cf. Schwendner (2002), 108–111. At line 21, the text refers to itself as Ομή(ρου) μαντ(εῖον), 'Oracle of Homer'.

[136] Text as shown in *P. Oxy.* LVI.3831.1–6, trs. Sirivianou (1989), 46. Text courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society.

symbolic understanding was obviously required.[137] The specified incantation to be spoken is also included in the Oxyrynchus text: the first line of the invocation identifies Apollo as the god mentioned.[138] The enquirer's desire or question had to be silent. The Oracle of Homer could only be consulted on certain days at prescribed times, according to a schema dividing the day into three times or sections. For example, if one wanted to consult the oracle on the 10th day of the month one would be instructed not to use the oracle that day but to wait until the next day (11th) and use the oracle early in the morning. On other days, it could be used either all day, or at midday, at dawn or in the evening.[139]

The *Homeromanteia* attest to a more widespread use beyond Neoplatonism of Homeric verse as a source of sacred truth in Late Antiquity and as inspired utterance which is used within divination. The use of the *Homeromanteia* suggests that Neoplatonic attitudes towards Homer and oracles need to be considered within the much broader Late Antique cultural context of attitudes towards literature and religion. Nor does the *Homeromanteion* seem to be an isolated or exceptional phenomenon: in the so-called 'Apollonian invocation' of the magical papyri (a text dated by scholars to the fourth or fifth century A.D.), we see a clear interest in *epopoiia* ('divination in epic verses'): 'And when he [i.e. Apollo] comes, ask him about what you wish, about the art of prophecy, about divination with epic verses (*epopoiia*), about the sending of dreams' (καὶ ὅταν εἰσέλθῃ, ἐρώτα αὐτόν, περὶ οὗ θέλεις, περὶ μαντείας, περὶ ἐποποιίας, περὶ ὀνειροπομπείας...).[140] This text offers further evidence for important links between Homeric epic and divination practices in Late Antiquity. It is difficult to reconstruct an accurate picture of the users of the *Homeromanteion* due to lack of evidence. However, the provenance and cultural context of both the Oxyrynchus text and the *PGM* suggest that it was Egyptian priests who primarily used the *Homeromanteion*.[141] It has been argued convincingly that all of the major magical texts that make up the Greek magical papyri come from an Egyptian

[137] Karanika (2011), 258–260; 264–266, discusses the lack of performance circumstances and context surrounding the use of the *Homeromanteion*; there are no surviving questions put to the oracle or accounts of consulting this oracle.

[138] *P. Oxy.* LVI.3831, 7–11 in Sirivianou (1989), 45–46.

[139] *P. Oxy.* LVI.3831, 12–20 in Sirivianou (1989), 45–46. Cf. also Schwendner (2002), 109, n. 10: 'A very similar list of good and bad times to use the oracles ... appears in the *Sortes Astrampsychi*. The division of the day into three parts is characteristically Egyptian.'

[140] *PGM* I.327–330 in Preisendanz (1928), Vol. 1. Papyrus in Berlin, Staatliche Museen (*P. Berol.* Inv. 5025, dated to fourth-fifth century A.D.). Trs. E.N. O'Neill in Betz (1986), *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 11 © 1986, 1992 by The University of Chicago. Cf. Karanika (2011), 259–260. The widely attested use of Homeric verses for magical purposes beyond divination: Collins (2008), 211–236; Karanika (2011), 260–264.

[141] Betz (1986), xliv–xlvii; Schwendner (2002), 111 n. 14.

tradition and this certainly seems to be the case for both *PGM* IV, the Great Paris Magical Papyrus, and for *PGM* VII, the London papyrus which begins with the *Homeromanteion*.[142] Based on a detailed study of the literary finds of the University of Michigan's excavations at Dimê (Soknopaiou Nesos) and Karanis in Egypt, Schwendner argues that the *Homeromanteia* were utilised by Egyptian priests in Late Antiquity who were bilingual in Demotic and Greek.[143]

The Oracle on Plotinus in Porphyry's Life of Plotinus

Porphyry's characterisation of oracles and mythological texts as 'enigmas' which need to be decoded in order to be fully understood is also reflected in the oracle on Plotinus, a long oracle of fifty-one hexameters cited in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*.[144] Porphyry states that after Plotinus' death, the Oracle of Apollo had been consulted by Amelius, a fellow student of Plotinus, who had asked the Oracle about the fate of the soul of Plotinus.[145] However he does not specify explicitly which Oracle Amelius had consulted, although the numerous references to famous literary oracular responses from Delphi (including the Delphic oracle given to Socrates in Plato's *Apology*) contained in Porphyry's introduction to the oracle suggest that it may have been derived from the Delphic Oracle.[146]

Within this text, oracle and allegory meet. This oracle is mythical and allusive in tone, style and content: it contains numerous allusions to the works of Homer, Hesiod and Empedocles.[147] However, all references to the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are based on the allegorical interpretations of these works employed by the later Platonists.[148] For example, the oracle addresses Plotinus' soul:

> δαῖμον, ἄνερ τὸ πάροιθεν, ἀτὰρ νῦν δαίμονος αἴσῃ
> θειοτέρῃ πελάων, ὅτ' ἐλύσαο δεσμὸν ἀνάγκης
> ἀνδρομενής, ῥεθέων δὲ πολυφλοίσβοιο κυδοιμοῦ
> ῥωσάμενος πραπίδεσσιν ἐς ᾐόνα νηχύτου ἀκτῆς

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[142] Betz (1986), xliv–xlvii; Johnson (1986), lvii; Ritner (1995), 3354–3356; 3358–3371; Frankfurter (1998), 210–214; (2000), 175–183; Schwendner (2002), 111; Dieleman (2005).

[143] Schwendner (2002), 107–111. For a broader survey of the bilingual (Greek and Demotic) capacities of Egyptian priests and their authorship of the Greek and Demotic magical papyri: Ritner (1995), 3358–3371; Fowden (1986), 16, 45–74; Dieleman (2005).

[144] Porphyry, *Plot.* 22.13–63.

[145] Porphyry, *Plot.* 22.9–10.

[146] Porphyry, *Plot.* 22.1–8, citing Hesiod, *Theogony* 35; Herodotus 1.47; Diogenes Laertius II.5.37; Plato, *Ap.* 21a.

[147] Empedoclean allusions: Edwards (1990a), 151–155. Homeric allusions: Armstrong (1966), 66; Edwards (1988), 511–521; Igal (1984), 88–89. Hesiodic allusions: Armstrong (1966), 65. Allusions to Maximus of Tyre: Igal (1984), 100–105.

[148] Igal (1984), 99; 101; Lamberton (1986), 132–133; Edwards (1988), 511; 513–515.

νήχε᾽ ἐπειγόμενος δήμου ἄπο νόσφιν ἀλιτρῶν
στηρίξαι καθαρῆς ψυχῆς εὐκαμπέα οἶμην.

Daimon – once a man, but now approaching
The holier lot of a *daimon*! The bond of human necessity
Is broken and you are bursting out of the noisy chaos of the flesh,
Powerful, using your wits to bring you to the shore of the seawashed headland,
Far from the crowd of sinners, to walk the lovely path of a pure soul.[149]

This passage and the following twenty lines are based on an allegorical interpretation of Odysseus' swim ashore after the wreck of his raft in the *Odyssey* and, more broadly, of the voyages of Odysseus as a symbol of the journey of the soul, the central premise which underlies Porphyry's interpretation of *Odyssey* 13.96–112 in *De antro nympharum* and which acts as an implicit backdrop to the entire oracle on Plotinus. Plotinus is compared to Odysseus (as a symbol of the journey of the human soul) and found to surpass the epic hero.[150]

Furthermore, the proem (22.13–22) and epilogue (22.61–63) of the oracle also contribute to its literary character to such an extent that Igal has characterised it as *both* an oracle *and* a hymn.[151] In the proem, Apollo speaks of playing his lyre and calls the Muses to accompany him 'as when they were summoned to set the dance going for Aeacides with divine inspiration in the verses of Homer' (... οἷον ἐπ᾽ Αἰακίδῃ στῆσαι χορὸν ἐκλήιχθεν ἀθανάτων μανίαισιν Ὁμηρείαισί τ᾽ ἀοιδαῖς.).[152] In the epilogue, Apollo again addresses the Muses asking them to sing and dance in honour of Plotinus.[153] From the perspective of the oracle itself, Apollo and the Muses were the real authors of the *Iliad* in honour of Achilles, just as they are now the authors of the hymn-oracle in praise of Plotinus. Homer appears in the oracle as the inspired spokesman of the gods, their prophet or seer, just as the human spokesman or prophet who uttered the oracle is seen as the inspired receptacle of the gods; this view corresponds with the Porphyrian and later Neoplatonic view of Homer as the inspired prophet of the gods. Igal claims convincingly that the double character of the oracle (as oracle and hymn) corresponds to the double function played by Apollo within the oracle: as both the god of oracles and the god of poetry and philosophy, that is to say the 'leader of the Muses'.[154] In this sense, the oracle on Plotinus situates itself at the borderline between prophecy and poetry and explicitly comments on the divine

[149] Porphyry, *Plot.* 22.23–28, trs. Lamberton (1986), 133.

[150] For a detailed examination of this implicit allegorical 'reading' of the *Odyssey* in the oracle on Plotinus cf. Edwards (1988), 509–521.

[151] Igal (1984), 87–89.

[152] Porphyry, *Plot.* 22.13–19 (Armstrong).

[153] Porphyry, *Plot.* 22.61–63 (Armstrong).

[154] Igal (1984), 88–89.

inspiration thought to be common to both. This self-conscious location of the oracle is especially fitting given the centrality of the allegorical interpretation of the *Odyssey* contained within it.

The extraordinary depth and density of mythological, literary and philosophical allusion within this oracle (as well as its unusual length) has led scholars to argue that it was composed by a Neoplatonist philosopher, with most arguing for Porphyry or Amelius.[155] Luc Brisson suggests that it was an oracular poem submitted for the approval of Apollo at an oracle centre.[156] Based on a detailed study of the linguistic and conceptual parallels between the oracle on Plotinus and Plato's *Republic* 540a–c (a passage in which the philosopher-rulers who achieved the vision of the Good and ruled with their eyes focused on the Good will go to the Islands of the Blessed after death and will be worshipped as daimonic beings, if the Pythia at Delphi sanctions this, which Igal argues represents the main philosophical background of the oracle), Igal suggests that the oracle was composed by Amelius and submitted to, and issued with, the approval of the Delphic priesthood.[157] Given Porphyry's introductory comments to the oracle, which suggest a Delphic origin, these suggestions seem eminently likely. The interplay and close interaction between philosophers and oracular sanctuaries which this suggestion entails is typical not only of Porphyry's approach to oracles (as displayed in the *Philosophy from Oracles*) but also of the broader Late Antique religious and cultural milieux.[158]

Others have argued that the oracle must have been composed by a Neoplatonist philosopher within the course of a private oracular ritual. Goulet argues that the oracle is the result of a private theurgic ritual, historically explicable through the personal link of Amelius with the philosophical-religious milieu of Apamea.[159] Such an origin for the oracle is certainly possible, but it is important to recognise that for Neoplatonist philosophers, utterances produced by a philosopher whose mind was thought to have fully realised and attained to *Nous* and was thus close to the divine were considered to be oracles, and no less 'genuine' than those produced by an institutional oracle centre. In other words, for a Neoplatonist, a philosopher could be just as inspired by Apollo as the Pythia or any other prophet(ess) and could consequently produce and utter oracles in a similar way.

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155 Edwards (2000a), 40, n. 229; (1988), 515–516; (1990a), 151; 154 n. 2.

156 Brisson (1990), 87.

157 Igal (1984), 83–115 (especially 114–115); followed by Athanassiadi (1989–90), 275.

158 Cf. Chapter 1, especially pp. 1–4; 14–16.

159 Goulet (1982), 369–412.

Oracles as Divine σύμβολα

If Porphyry conceived of oracles as 'theophanies', as a manifestation of divine truth in human language and as a reflection of the hierarchical structure of the cosmos, then there are at least some grounds for maintaining that Porphyry saw oracles themselves as divine symbols (σύμβολα).

As we have seen, for later Neoplatonist philosophers, particularly Iamblichus and Proclus, a divine symbol (σύμβολον) is a direct and ineffable link with divine truth, operating on the level of a talisman.[160] Through sympathy (συμπάθεια), the symbol is a direct manifestation of divine energy, containing within itself the reflection of divinity and directly linked through a 'sympathetic chain' (and through divine love) with a particular deity. Does Porphyry hold a similar or different conception of a symbol (σύμβολον)? Within *De antro nympharum*, he uses the word over thirty times to refer to the 'symbols' to be interpreted allegorically.[161] Above, I have attempted to show that Porphyry's interpretation of the cave, symbolising both the intelligible cosmos and the sensible cosmos, implicitly utilises the concept of sympathy since the interpretations are linked: the sensible cosmos is a manifestation of, and participates in, the intelligible cosmos.

Indeed there is further evidence that Porphyry conceived of a symbol (σύμβολον) in this way. Porphyry relates that Pythagoras had three ways of speaking, which he learned from the Egyptians:

> Καὶ ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ μὲν τοῖς ἱερεῦσι συνῆν καὶ τὴν σοφίαν ἐξέμαθε καὶ τὴν Αἰγυπτίων φωνήν, γραμμάτων δὲ τρισσὰς διαφοράς, ἐπιστολογραφικῶν τε καὶ ἱερογλυφικῶν καὶ συμβολικῶν, τῶν μὲν κυριολογουμένων κατὰ μίμησιν, τῶν δ' ἀλληγορουμένων κατά τινας αἰνιγμούς.
>
> In Egypt he lived among the priests and learned the wisdom and language of the Egyptians, and three kinds of letters, epistolographic and also hieroglyphic and symbolic, the first being literal speech according to *mimesis*, and the others allegorizing according to certain enigmas.[162]

Porphyry also contrasts symbolic utterances with those that can be described by discursive reasoning:

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[160] Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 30–32; Iamblichus, *DM* 1.11 (37.7–8); 1.21 (65.5–11); 2.11 (96.15); 4.2 (184.1–10); 6.6 (247.1–5); 7.1 (250.1–14).

[161] Porphyry, *De antr. nymph*. 6.14, 22; 8.5, 20, 29, 31; 10.25; 12.4, 9; 14.27, 30, 31; 16.3, 20, 31; 18.21, 25; 20.5, 25, 19; 22.2; 26.12; 28.17; 30.2, 14, 23.

[162] Porphyry, *VP* 11.10–12.4, ed. Des Places (1982); trs. Struck (2004), 198, with emendations.

> Ὅσα γε μὴν τοῖς προσιοῦσι διελέγετο, ἢ διεξοδικῶς ἢ συμβολικῶς παρήνει.
>
> All the things that were discussed with those who came to him [i.e. Pythagoras], he counselled either symbolically or discursively.[163]

The fact that Porphyry states that Pythagoras spoke in two different modes, the symbolic (συμβολικῶς) and the discursive (διεξοδικῶς), demonstrates that for Porphyry, these different types of exposition can be used to discuss and explain different matters. This statement also hints at the idea that the mode of exposition used depends on the capacity and ability of the hearer to correctly understand the mode of expression used.

Oracles Issuing Instructions regarding *σύμβολα* of the Gods

Some of the oracles contained within the fragments of Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* specifically issue instructions concerning the symbols (σύμβολα) of the gods, as part of the ritual instruction for the construction and consecration of cult statues. The oracles which deal more generally with ritual instruction will be discussed in Chapter 3. Here, we will take a closer look at a few oracles which specifically mention symbols of the gods. Preceding one such oracle, Porphyry's commentary sets out the symbols of Hekate and Ouranos:

> Ἔστι δὲ σύμβολα μὲν τῆς Ἑκάτης κηρὸς τρίχρωμος, ἐκ λευκοῦ καὶ μέλανος καὶ ἐρυθροῦ συνεστώς, ἔχων τύπον Ἑκάτης φερούσης μάστιγα καὶ λαμπάδα καὶ ξίφος, περὶ ἣν εἱλείσθω δράκων· Οὐρανοῦ δὲ ἀστέρες οἱ θαλάττιοι πρὸ τῶν θυρῶν πεπατταλευμένοι.
>
> The symbols of Hekate are three-coloured wax, consisting of white and black and red, having a figure of Hekate carrying a scourge, and a torch, and a sword, with a serpent to be coiled round her; and the symbols of Uranus are the stars of the sea pinned to the front of the doors.[164]

The symbols mentioned here – three-coloured wax, the whip, the torch, the sword and the serpent – are attributes relating to Hekate's role as an Underworld deity. Porphyry also relates the symbols of Ouranos: the stars of sailors and seafarers which were presumably nailed to the entrances of houses as an apotropaic and protective measure. In another oracle, Hekate instructs the enquirer how to

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163 Porphyry, *VP* 36 (Des Places); trs. Struck (2004), 201.

164 Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 320F, lines 2–6 = *PE* 5.14.2–3.

consecrate her statue: her attributes include white robes, golden sandals and snakes which must be wrapped around her cult statue; the goddess also instructs the enquirer to make her statue from Parian stone or polished ivory.[165] In a further oracle, Hekate again issues instructions detailing the correct procedures for the consecration of her statue: wild rue, lizards, resin, myrrh and frankincense must be prepared and combined together 'under the crescent moon'.[166] The timing of the ritual to consecrate her statue is significant here, since Hekate was closely connected with the moon goddesses Artemis and Selene. Hecate then instructs the enquirer to adorn her temple with self-planted laurel and to offer many prayers to her cult statue and then she advises the enquirer that she will appear to them in their sleep. Thus, this oracle clearly issues instructions for preparations in order to receive a dream oracle from Hecate.

These oracles issue detailed instructions regarding the symbols of the gods. Many of these symbols consist of the deity's traditional cultic attributes and symbols, customarily used to adorn the deity's cultic statue. However, the fact that within these oracles the gods themselves deliver the details of their symbols points to theurgic instruction and indicates that Porphyry is citing them for theurgic purposes. If oracles themselves were conceived within Porphyry's work as being divine symbols, then we see here a self-reflective situation: the oracles (themselves σύμβολα) deliver and advise the enquirer about other divine symbols (σύμβολα) of the gods. This mode of self-reflection could also be analogous to allegorical exegesis, as both involve a kind of double or multiple vision where symbols can be detected within symbols. Again, an enigmatic mode of 'double vision' and signification seems to underlie Porphyry's oracle collection.

Conclusion

Oracles are closely connected with allegory and mystery rituals within Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*: all three are viewed as tools for the attainment of divine vision and privileged understanding and thus aid the salvation of the soul, and all of them are conceptualised as requiring a type of 'initiation' and thus necessitating secrecy. The parallel between oracular revelation and knowledge with revelation through mystery rituals is implicit within Porphyry's introduction to his oracle collection. Drawing on a tradition stretching back at least as far as Plato, who compared the divine vision attained through mystery cults with that obtained through philosophical training and thought, Porphyry presents the view that oracles are a secret tool with the potential to be used for the attainment of divine vision. Porphyry's characterisation of both oracles and mythological texts (for

[165] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 319F = *PE* 5.13.3–4.
[166] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 317F = *PE* 5.12.1–2.

which he advocates the necessity of allegorical exegesis) as 'enigmas' suggests that the oracles could help the intelligent, pagan reader to understand the nature of the gods and the metaphysical structure of the cosmos, when read in an allegorical manner. The oracle on Plotinus in Porphyry's *Life* explicitly connects oracles with allegory, since it relies on an allegorical interpretation of the *Odyssey* and comments on the status of Homer as a prophet of the gods, in line with Porphyry's interpretative strategy in *De antro nympharum*. Allegory implies the necessity of a reader with 'multiple vision'; one who can read the multiple meanings hidden under the surface of a text. Porphyry implicitly conceptualises allegorical exegesis as necessitating ideas of initiation and secrecy. Oracles are thus conceived of as 'enigmas' which need to be decoded allegorically; they are implicitly assimilated with mystery rituals, since the divine vision available within oracles and mystery rituals requires an 'initiation'.

The underlying idea that divine insight and truth can only be granted to the initiated is endorsed by oracular sanctuaries themselves during the Late Antique period, such as the Oracle at Claros, as well as by Porphyry and other Platonist philosophers, suggesting a widespread view which linked divine knowledge and insight with ideas of initiation and cultic secrecy. Porphyry's connection of oracular knowledge and insight with the vision and insight obtained through mystery cults is also reflected and attested in contemporary Late Antique oracular responses from Claros and Didyma and in ritual praxis at these important oracular sanctuaries, as attested by epigraphic evidence. Again, this evidence points towards Porphyry's sympathy and inextricable connections with contemporary ritual and religious praxis and situates the *Philosophy from Oracles* firmly within its contemporary religious milieu.

This network of associations suggests Porphyry's ritualistic framework and understanding of oracles: the allegorical interpretation or 'reading' of oracles was in itself a ritual, like a mystery rite, which could function as a kind of philosophical initiation, bestowing insight upon those with the capacity to understand and acting as a link with the divine realm. Thus the correct and appropriate 'reading' of the oracles can assist the philosopher with their quest for the salvation of the soul, by allowing them to imitate the divine by attaining divine vision. Although it is difficult to ascertain exactly what level of perception and vision Porphyry conceived of in this work, the picture of oracles presented in the *Philosophy from Oracles* suggests that Porphyry conceptualised the type of divine vision which could be attained from the oracles as moving beyond the level of discursive reasoning into a level of understanding on the level of νοῦς (Intellect).

There is also some evidence that Porphyry conceived of oracles themselves as σύμβολα of the gods, since they are conceptualised as 'theophanies', manifestations of the divine. We have examined the oracles in the collection in which the gods advise and set out many divine symbols. Here we see a self-reflective situation: the oracles (themselves σύμβολα) deliver and advise the enquirer about other

divine symbols (σύμβολα) of the gods. This mode of self-reflection could also be viewed as being analogous to allegorical exegesis, both involving a kind of double or multiple vision where σύμβολα can be detected within σύμβολα. For Porphyry, oracles and ritual are inextricably connected. The reception of oracles is conceptualised as a type of philosophical ritual, functioning as a philosophical initiation. Simultaneously, oracles themselves give ritual instruction and detail other types of divine symbols.

Overall, then, the connections between oracles and allegory (and mystery cults in the case of the *Philosophy from Oracles*) in Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* and the oracle on Plotinus should be viewed within the wider historical context of Late Antique attitudes towards literature and religion. The use of the *Homeromanteia* (Oracles of Homer) attests to more widespread attitudes towards Homer's status as an inspired prophet and the use of Homeric epic as oracular utterance and ritual text. Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* and the oracle on Plotinus can therefore be firmly placed within the contemporary religious and cultural milieux of Late Antiquity.

Chapter 3
Debating Oracles: Pagan and Christian Perspectives

In Late Antiquity, pagan–Christian religious debates often focused on the nature and roles of oracles and ritual as a potential source of religious authority and legitimacy. In this regard, Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* played a central role in pagan–Christian interaction and polemic in the late third and early fourth centuries A.D. Within an intellectual and cultural context, the work was taken by Christian apologists as emblematic of pagan views on oracles and was consequently a key polemical target. In relation to this context, this chapter explores pagan–Christian debates by focusing on a central case study: the implicit and polemical debate evident in Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*, which engages with and argues against Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*.[1] Within both works, oracles are often used as a springboard to discuss wider issues such as the nature of ritual and the authority and validity of pagan and Christian modes of interacting with the divine. Eusebius' demonology and attitude towards oracles will be examined through his debate with Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* and his use of Oenomaus of Gadara. In order to contextualise Eusebius' polemic, it is necessary first to examine the content of Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*, including oracles which issue ritual instructions, the connections between oracles and theurgic ritual, and astrology as a form of oracular divination and as a guide for ritual instruction. Eusebius challenges the legitimacy of oracles using two key strategies: (1) by equating the pagan gods with evil *daimones*, a line of polemic which had a long tradition in early Christianity; this identification consequently enabled him to claim that oracles were given by evil *daimones*; and (2) by blurring the boundaries between theurgy, pagan religious traditions and magic, a rhetorical strategy which was much more original and which was taken up with gusto by Eusebius' successors.[2] I will argue

[1] Eusebius, *PE*, ed. Des Places (1974–80), trs. Gifford (1903; repr. 1981). All citations and translations of this work are taken from these editions (except direct citations of *Phil. Orac*. which are drawn from Girgenti and Muscolino [2011]).

[2] Cf. Kahlos (2007), who explores the discursive construction of both Christian and pagan identities in early Christian polemical and apologetic literature, arguing that Christian apologists argue against a highly contrived 'paganism' that usually bears only a distorted relationship to the realities of traditional religious practice. Meanwhile, 'magic' is a problematic term whose possible meaning and connotations have been debated extensively by scholars: cf. Chapter 1, p. 32, n. 168 and p. 34, n. 179. In this study, I use the word to refer

that oracles were inextricably connected with ritual in Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*, a link which was exploited by Eusebius who conflates different types of ritual practice in order to give a biased perspective on oracles.

Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* is also seen as key to pagan–Christian interaction and conflict during this period within a much more overtly historical and political context. Recently, it has been claimed that the work was written specifically within the context of the Great Persecution of the Christians instigated by Diocletian and the Tetrarchy in A.D. 303.[3] This claim remains uncertain but the question is worth considering in some detail, given that it has important implications for interpretations of the purposes and scope of the *Philosophy from Oracles*, for our view of Porphyry and his activities and, in a much wider sense, for the dimensions of Diocletian's Persecution and pagan–Christian interaction during this period. In a broader sense, the exact nature of the relationship between, and possible identification of, Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* and his work *Against the Christians* is a much-debated issue. These issues have often dominated discussions of Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*. This chapter seeks to redress the balance by examining them alongside an exploration of the content of the work and by contextualising the roles of the *Philosophy from Oracles* within the religious and intellectual contexts of Neoplatonism (particularly its relation to theurgy) as well as within the broader religious debates between pagan and Christian intellectuals.

Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* and *Against the Christians*

Was Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* identical with, or a part of, his work *Against the Christians*? This debate arises from two key methodological problems: (1) the fragmentary nature of both works and the ensuing difficulty of reconstructing them, and (2) uncertainty regarding the status and nature of *Against the Christians*. The consensus is that Porphyry wrote a treatise in fifteen volumes called *Against the Christians*, but scholars disagree concerning whether this was a complete work separate from Porphyry's other treatises or whether it was a collection of Porphyry's treatises, including the *Philosophy from Oracles*.[4] These two methodological problems are intimately connected: these Porphyrian treatises survive *only* in fragments (often cited without definite attribution to a specific work by invariably hostile Christian polemicists) at least partly because of

specifically to the Greek term γοητεία, which was used most frequently in Antiquity to refer to antagonistic magical practices.

[3] Cf. Wilken (1984), 134–137; (1979), 130–134; Beatrice (1989), 258–261; Simmons (1995), 22–25; 77–78; Digeser (1998), 129–146; (2000), 91–107; 161–163.

[4] Cf. Wilken (1984); (1979), 118–120; Beatrice (1989), 248–281; (1992), 347–355; Berchman (2005); Edwards (2007), 111–126; Magny (2011), 1–17.

Christian suppression of evidence: by the close of the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325, Constantine had ordered the destruction of Porphyry's anti-Christian works while the later Christian emperors Theodosius II and Valentinian III had again banned these works and consigned them to the flames in A.D. 448.[5] Whether these prohibitions included *Philosophy from Oracles* is uncertain, but extremely likely given that it was seen by Christian Church Fathers as an anti-Christian polemical work.[6] It is important to bear in mind this active Christian suppression of Porphyry's works, which inevitably adds to the distorted and biased perspective of them as presented in hostile Late Antique Christian works.[7]

The debate concerning the possible relationship between the works *Philosophy from Oracles* and *Against the Christians* arises from two key issues: firstly, from the presence of anti-Christian polemic in some extant fragments of the *Philosophy from Oracles*.[8] For example, Augustine cites an oracle attributed to Hekate from Porphyry, which criticises the Christians for worshipping Jesus, a mortal man, as a god:

> *...de Christo autem, inquit, interrogantibus si est deus, ait Hecate: 'quoniam quidem inmortalis anima post corpus [ut] incedit, nosti; a sapientia autem abscisa semper errat. uiri pietate praestantissimi est illa anima; hanc colunt aliena a se ueritate.' deinde post uerba huius quasi oraculi sua ipse contexens: 'piissimum igitur uirum, inquit, eum dixit et eius animam, sicut et aliorum piorum, post obitum immortalitate dignatam et hanc colere Christianos ignorantes.'*
>
> On the other hand, to those who asked whether Christ was God, Hecate replied, 'You know that the immortal soul goes on its way after it leaves the body; whereas when it is cut off from wisdom it wanders for ever. That soul belongs to a man of outstanding piety; this they worship because truth is a stranger to them.' Then, after quoting this supposed oracle he adds his own interpretation: 'Thus Hecate

[5] Constantine's orders for the destruction of Porphyry's works: Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1.9.30; *Codex Theodosianus* 15.5.66; 'Edictum Theodosii et Valentiniani' (Collect. Vatic. 138) (17 February 448; *Collectiana Vaticana*) I, I, 4 in Schwartz (1927), 66.3–4; 8–12; Kofsky (2002), 18–19.

[6] Cf. Johnson (2009), 115; Girgenti and Muscolino (2011), 46–47.

[7] Of course many works from Antiquity survive only in fragments, which are always difficult to reconstruct and contextualise. In the case of ancient Greek literature, the ratio of surviving literature to lost literature is in the order of 1:40. Yet the deliberate and systematic suppression of Porphyry's anti-Christian works is surely a significant factor in this case which must be taken into account. Cf. Magny (2011), 6–7; 39–59.

[8] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 343F = Augustine, *City of God* 19.22.17–23.17; 344F = *City of God* 19.23.30–37; 344aF = *City of God* 20.24.8–26; 344bF = *City of God* 22.3.22–25; 344cF = *City of God* 22.25.1–15; 345bF = *City of God* 10.27.37–39; 345cF = *De Consensu Evangelistarum* 1.15.23; 346F = *City of God* 19.23.107–133. Cf. Addey (2010), 149–165.

> said that he was a most devout man, and that his soul, like the souls of the other devout men, was endowed after death with the immortality it deserved; and that Christians in their ignorance worship this soul.'[9]

In its praise of Jesus as an immortal soul, this oracle is even more devastating in terms of its criticism of Christianity, since it implicitly locates Jesus within the framework of traditional Graeco-Roman religion, while simultaneously criticising the Christians for being estranged from the truth about the gods.

Secondly, many of the early Patristic authors and apologists who attack Porphyry refer to what may be the *Philosophy from Oracles* as 'written against us'.[10] Yet neither Eusebius nor any other Late Antique Christian writer explicitly refers to a title *Against the Christians*.[11] The first explicit reference to a single work named *Against the Christians* does not occur until approximately A.D. 1000 in the *Suda*; it is uncertain whether this reference refers to an integral treatise by Porphyry or, as seems more likely, a later Byzantine epitome of his anti-Christian writings.[12] The *Suda* refers to fifteen *logoi* or discourses against the Christians by Porphyry; in this lexicon, the usual term for divisions of a single work is *biblia*, or 'books'; this unusual designation (coupled with the lexicon's failure to mention either *Philosophy from Oracles* or the *Letter to Anebo*) has led scholars to view *Against the Christians* as a small library of discrete works or a later Byzantine epitome of his works.[13]

Some scholars argue that the works are identical: *Philosophy from Oracles* is to be identified with *Against the Christians* or formed a part of this work.[14] A recent collection and translation of *Against the Christians* contains fragments which are explicitly attributed by ancient sources, such as Augustine, to the *Philosophy from Oracles*; the editor explains these inclusions by arguing that the

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[9] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac*. 345aF, lines 9–17 = Augustine, *City of God* 19.23.55–62, trs. Bettenson (1972; repr. 2003); also cited in paraphrase by Eusebius, *DE* 3.6.39–7.2 = 345F. Clark (2011), 400, notes that Augustine may not have read *Phil. Orac.* directly but rather may have cited this extract through an intermediary source such as Lactantius (who also cites this oracle), from whom Augustine borrowed so much.

[10] Against the Christians: Eusebius, *HE* 6.19.1–4; the third book of Porphyry's treatise against the Christians: Eusebius, *HE* 6.19 (282.7–11); 'the work against us': Eusebius, *PE* 1.9.20; 5.1.9; 5.5.5.1–4; 5.36.5; 10.9.11; Lactantius, *Divine institutes* 5.2; cf. Wilken (1984), 148–163; Berchman (2005), 3–5.

[11] Magny (2011), 8–10.

[12] *Suda* IV.178 (Adler); Berchman (2005), 3.

[13] Edwards (2007), 112; 116; 125–126; Berchman (2005), 3–5; Magny (2011), 8–9.

[14] Beatrice (1992), 347–355; Berchman (2005), 3–5; Edwards (2007), 112; 116; 125–126.

work now known as *Against the Christians* comprised several sources, including *Philosophy from Oracles*.[15]

Secondly, John J. O'Meara argued that the lost *Philosophy from Oracles* should be identified with a further lost work of Porphyry, *De regressu animae* (*On the Return of the Soul*), which is referred to only in Augustine's *City of God*.[16] O'Meara based his hypothesis on the numerous verbal correspondences between the works, the heavy use both make of oracles and their tacit condemnation of the Christian Church for bigotry.[17] It is now generally held that Pierre Hadot has disproved O'Meara's theory but the debate about the independence and assimilation of the above works continues.[18]

Most recently, P.F. Beatrice has attempted to identify the works *De regressu animae* and *Against the Christians* with the *Philosophy from Oracles*, arguing that all comprised one work whose genuine title was *Philosophy from Oracles* and that this was the only work by Porphyry which ever gave offence to the Christians.[19] When the Church Fathers mention a work against the Christians by Porphyry, Beatrice considers that this is a description of the intent and contents of the work rather than a formal title.[20] In fact, Beatrice claims that the 'books of (the) Platonists' (*libri platonicorum*) which Augustine read at Milan only refers to Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*, which he argues was the only Porphyrian work known to Augustine.[21] Yet on two occasions when Eusebius refers to the 'work against us' he juxtaposes it with the *Philosophy from Oracles* in a way that suggests they are separate works.[22] Furthermore, in another two citations Eusebius refers to the fourth book 'written against us', yet we know that the *Philosophy from Oracles* had only three books, a strong indication that they are separate works.[23] Beatrice also argues that Eusebius' mode of citing from Porphyry's *On Statues* indicates that this treatise was embedded within the *Philosophy from Oracles*;[24] furthermore, he also connects the *Letter to Anebo* with the *Philosophy from Oracles* as part of the latter work.[25] Yet this last proposal does scant justice to Iamblichus' citation of the *Letter to Anebo* as an

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[15] Berchman (2005), 3; 5–6; 124 (F3 = 324F = Eusebius, *PE* 9.10.1–5), 125–130 (F4 = Augustine, *City of God* 19.23 = 343F; 344F; 345aF; 346F. Cf. Edwards (2007), 116; 125–126; Magny (2011), 35–36.

[16] Augustine, *City of God* 10.29.61–62; 10.32.5–6 = F12 (Bidez); O'Meara (1959), 7–49; followed by Beatrice (1989), 255–256.

[17] O'Meara (1959) 7–49.

[18] Hadot (1960), 205–244. Cf. Smith (1987), 732–733, for a review of this debate.

[19] Beatrice (1989), 266–267; (1992), 347–355.

[20] Beatrice (1989), 260–261.

[21] Beatrice (1989), 248–264; 266–267.

[22] Eusebius, *PE* 5.5.5.1–4; 5.36.5.1–3; Wilken (1979), 128; Edwards (2007), 112, n. 5.

[23] Eusebius, *PE* 1.9.20; 10.9.11; Wilken (1979), 128.

[24] Beatrice (1989), 252–254.

[25] Beatrice (1989), 264.

independent document.[26] In fact, all of the identifications suggested by Beatrice are uncertain and problematic. For example, if Augustine's 'books of (the) Platonists' are to be identified with a Latin translation of Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* undertaken by Marius Victorinus, as Beatrice argues, a problem immediately arises concerning Augustine's citation of the title of the *Philosophy from Oracles*, which he quotes in Greek rather than in a Latin translation or paraphrase.[27] Indeed, all of Beatrice's proposals for identification of Porphyrian treatises with *Against the Christians* are unlikely, unless *Against the Christians* was indeed a later Byzantine epitome of Porphyrian works.

The question as to whether *Philosophy from Oracles* and *Against the Christians* are separate works, or if the former work comprised part of the latter, remains conjectural and cannot be answered with any certainty, unless further evidence were to come to light. However, at least one conclusion can be drawn with certainty: the Christians clearly saw *Philosophy from Oracles* as an anti-Christian polemical work which specifically targeted their religion. However, this inevitably tells us more about the perspectives of the Church Fathers than about Porphyry's work and its aims! The Christian polemicists saw Porphyry as a formidable adversary, one of their greatest opponents, and wrote many works to refute his arguments: Eusebius' apologetical works were later followed by direct refutations by Methodius of Olympus, Apollinaris of Laodicea and Philostorgius.[28] Augustine also cited Porphyry as a bitter enemy of Christianity (although also as a learned Platonist who is close to Christianity) in his *City of God*.[29] These later refutations indicate that the Christians continued to perceive Porphyry's works as a major threat to Christianity until at least the fifth century A.D.[30]

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[26] Edwards (2007), 116.

[27] Augustine, *City of God* 19.23.1 (*CCSL* 48) = *Phil. Orac*. 343F, line 4.

[28] These works are lost and only a few fragments are extant. Methodius in Roberts and Donaldson (1869), 183; Apollinarius in H. Liezmann, 'Apollinaris und seine Schule', *TU* I (1904), 265 (cited in Digeser (1998), 129–146); Philostorgius in Bidez (1972). Cf. Kofsky (2002), 19, n. 72.

[29] Augustine, *City of God* 19.22–23. Clark (2011), 397–406, argues that Augustine viewed Porphyry primarily as a learned Platonist who was especially close to Christianity and that this is Porphyry's role in *City of God* 8–10. However, whether this was anything more than a forensic technique or a rhetorical strategy to strengthen Augustine's argumentation is debatable.

[30] Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 1.9.30, refers to Porphyry as 'an enemy of piety' (ὁ τῆς θεοσεβείας ἐχθρὸς). Cf. also Magny (2011), 7.

Was Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* a Tool in Diocletian's Persecution of the Christians?

Was Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* composed specifically within the historical and political context of Diocletian's Persecution of the Christians in A.D. 303, as a tool for the Persecution? Before examining Porphyry's possible involvement, it must be noted that, according to Christian narratives, oracles played a prominent role in the Persecution. For example, according to Constantine, the immediate cause for the Persecution was a Pythian oracle's complaint that Christians were preventing accurate prophecies, which is usually conflated with an episode reported by Lactantius in which in early 303 Diocletian sent a haruspex to consult with Apollo at Didyma.[31] Lactantius says that the Oracle answered as an 'enemy' of God which resulted in Diocletian issuing the edicts which began the Persecution. It has recently been argued that Constantine's account actually refers to a consultation with the Oracle of Apollo at Daphne in 299.[32] Whether or not these accounts refer to separate episodes, they show the importance of oracles in catalysing the Persecution.

It has been claimed that Porphyry was requested by the emperor to prepare a defence of the traditional religion which could be used as a justification for the forthcoming Persecution. This claim arises from a curious passage in Porphyry's *Letter to Marcella*, a work written by Porphyry late in life and therefore in accord chronologically with the events leading up to the Persecution, where he says that he was called away on a long journey by 'the affairs of the Greeks' (Καλούσης δὲ τῆς τῶν Ἑλλήνων χρείας).[33] Henry Chadwick has suggested that this sentence may refer to the Council in Nicomedia arranged by Diocletian for consultation about persecuting the Christians which occurred in approximately A.D. 303.[34] The Council is reported by the Christian writer Lactantius, who refers to two philosophers who assisted the Council, one of whom has been identified with Hierocles, the governor of Bithynia; the other philosopher is not named but is described as a 'high priest of philosophy' (*antistes philosophiae*)[35] who was:

> *...uerum ita uitiosus, ut continentiae magister non minus auaritia quam libidinibus arderet, in uictu tam sumptuosus, ut in schola uirtutis assertor, parsimoniae paupertatisque laudator, in palatio peius cenaret quam domi. Tamen uitia sua*

[31] Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* 2.48–54; Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* 10.1–6.

[32] Digeser (2004), 57–77.

[33] Porphyry, *Marc.* 4.15–16.

[34] Chadwick (1959), 142.

[35] Lactantius, *Divine institutes* 5.2. Cf. Wilken (1984), 135. Porphyry had called the philosopher 'priest of the god who rules over all' (ὁ φιλόσοφος καὶ θεοῦ τοῦ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἱερεὺς) in *Abst.* 2.49.1, strengthening the possibility that Lactantius here refers to Porphyry. Cf. Chapter 4, p. 151 and n. 110.

capillis et pallio et, quod maximum est uelamentum, diuitiis praetegebat: quas ut augeret, ad amicitiam iudicum miro ambitu penetrabat eosque sibi repente auctoritate falsi nominis obligabat, non modo ut eorum sententias uenderet, uerum etiam ut confines suos, quos sedibus agrisque pellebat, a suo repetendo hac potentia retardaret. Hic uero qui suas disputationes moribus destruebat, uel mores suos disputationibus arguebat ipse aduersum se grauis censor et accusator acerrimus, eodem ipso tempore quo iustus populus nefarie lacerabatur, tres libros euomuit contra religionem nomenque Christianorum.

...such a corrupt person that as a teacher of continence he burned no less with avarice than with inordinate desires; in sustenance he was so extravagant that in school he was a champion of virtue and a praiser of frugality and moderate circumstances, in the palace he ate worse than at home. Nevertheless, he used to cover his faults by his beard and the pallium and, which is the greatest veil, by his wealth: and so that he might increase his riches, he used to make his way into the friendship of judges by extremely unscrupulous lobbying, and he used to attach them to himself quickly by the influence of a sham reputation (*falsi nominis*), not only so that he might profit from their opinions (*ut eorum sententias uenderet*), but indeed also so that by this influence he might impede those close to him (whom he was dislodging from their homes and lands) from reclaiming their property. In the very same period in which a just people was being impiously torn to pieces, [this man] vomited forth three books against *religio* and the Christian *nomen*.[36]

Robert Wilken, Elizabeth Digeser and Michael Simmons have argued that this anonymous philosopher was Porphyry and the work to which Lactantius refers ('he wrote three books against us') is to be identified as the *Philosophy from Oracles*.[37] Their argument is supported by a passage from the *Martyrs of Palestine*, where Eusebius speaks of a place of incarceration which was 'aptly named from the porphyrite stone it yields', suggesting that he saw Porphyry as a persecutor as well as an anti-Christian polemicist.[38] Timothy Barnes has disputed this identification on the grounds that if Porphyry owned land, it was in Sicily or Southern Italy rather than in Bithynia, where Lactantius states that the anonymous philosopher resided.[39] Yet Mark Edwards has rightly noted that it is hardly probable that Porphyry owned land in Sicily, since when he went there to convalesce in 268 it was Plotinus who introduced him to his host.[40] Barnes further objects that it is

[36] Lactantius, *Divine institutes* 5.2.3–4, ed. Monat (1973); trs. Digeser (1998).

[37] Cf. p. 84, n. 3 above.

[38] Eusebius, *HE* 9; Edwards (2011), 217–232. However, Gillian Clark has suggested that Eusebius' comment could refer to the literal meaning of the term rather than to Porphyry the philosopher because the term could mean 'blood red' as well as 'purple'.

[39] Barnes (2001), 158–159.

[40] Edwards (2007), 117.

hard to reconcile what we know of Porphyry with Lactantius' portrait of a lavish glutton who encroached on his neighbour's property via legal and political means and, furthermore, that Lactantius' philosopher is blind and so cannot be identified with Porphyry for this reason.[41] However, these objections are unconvincing given that they assume a literal meaning of a passage which most readers are content to take as satirical invective; in other words, they do not allow for the satire which resonates throughout Lactantius' invective and in this sense they fail to sufficiently account for his polemical motivations.[42]

Although Lactantius' description of the anonymous philosopher sounds suspiciously like a satirical characterisation of Porphyry, the identification remains uncertain; thus the connection of Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* with the concrete historical events surrounding the Persecution remains speculative. However, it is quite possible that the *Philosophy from Oracles* was written within this context and a later date for this work (around A.D. 300) is much more likely than the early date which scholars used to favour.[43] Yet, as discussed in Chapter 2, Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* is first and foremost aimed at philosophers and potential philosophers who were followers of Graeco-Roman religions. Its central aim is to give an account of traditional Graeco-Roman religious practices and philosophical ideas. Thus, even if it is located within the concrete historical and political context as an intellectual tool for Diocletian's Persecution, it primarily acts as a positive defence of traditional Graeco-Roman religious traditions against the folly and innovation of Christianity.[44]

The Methodologies of Eusebius and Porphyry

Following the decade of persecution which finished in 313, Eusebius commenced work on a major Christian apologetic and polemic which comprised a dual composition of two works: the *Preparation for the Gospel* (*Praeparatio Evangelica*) in fifteen books and the *Proof of the Gospel* (*Demonstratio Evangelica*) in twenty books, of which the first ten survive complete.[45] The majority of extant fragments from Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* are cited within *Praeparatio Evangelica* 4 and 5.[46] Generally, these fragments (along with fragments of other Porphyrian works) are cited by Eusebius in order to attack and refute the validity and veracity

41 Barnes (2001), 158–159.

42 Edwards (2007), 117–118.

43 Cf. for example, Digeser (1998), 129–146.

44 As noted by Digeser (1998), 137–138; Wilken (1979), 124–125; 131.

45 Barnes (1981), 175; Kofsky (2002), 73–99; Johnson (2006); (2007), 97–98.

46 71% of the *PE* consists of citations, while only about 29% was written by Eusebius: see Kofsky (2002), 81; Magny (2011), 67. Des Places (1974) notes that Porphyry is quoted 96 times in *PE* and various Porphyrian writings are regularly discussed.

of traditional Graeco-Roman religion and thereby to further his argument about the truth of Scripture.[47] Eusebius' method of citing pagan sources directly in order to appear as an objective witness actually entails a deliberate selection of source material: as Ariane Magny has emphasised, 'Eusebius would certainly have chosen the passages from his opponents that would appear most harmful to them. Even if he means to offer an impartial account, we may assume that Eusebius made a personal selection from Porphyry, which would allow him to portray the man negatively.'[48] Furthermore, Magny has examined the citation process as practised in Antiquity in relation to Christian citations of Porphyry, pointing to the general lack of citation techniques in Antiquity, use of paraphrasing, lack of indication of second-hand sources and the frequent practice of making semantic changes to quotations in order to adapt the meaning of a citation to fit within a new context.[49] These methodological issues led her to conclude that 'although he [i.e. Eusebius] claims to be citing literally [from Porphyry], taking him at his word would mean understanding citations in a modern way'.[50] Furthermore, there is some evidence that Eusebius tampered with the original texts that he cites and that he was careless with quotations.[51]

Both Eusebius and Augustine (the other Christian writer who preserves the largest number of fragments from *Philosophy from Oracles*) use Porphyry as the representative *par excellence* of the 'Platonist philosopher'.[52] Indeed, Platonist philosophers played a central role in the philosophical defence of pagan religious practices and thought and, at least according to the Christians, Porphyry was the key philosopher involved in this defence. As noted, Porphyry was regarded by them as a formidable opponent of Christian doctrine, a reputation which persisted into the fifth century.[53]

The methodological approaches used by Eusebius and Porphyry were somewhat disparate and bear closer examination before turning to the implicit

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[47] Eusebius' rhetorical strategies: Kofsky (2002), 81–85; 241–249; 263–264; Magny (2011), 67–69.

[48] Magny (2011), 68.

[49] Magny (2011), 48–52.

[50] Magny (2011), 69.

[51] Bidez (1913; repr. 1964), 144; Magny (2011), 70–71.

[52] Eusebius, *PE* 1.10; 3.7; Augustine, *City of God* 10.27.1–2; 10.29.4–6; 10.29.15–20; 10.29.43–44; 10.29.58–64; 22.28.33–42; Kofsky (2002), 247; 263; 270–274; Clark (2011), 395–406, notes that Porphyry is not the only Platonist named or cited in the *City of God* (Augustine also engages with Apuleius), yet he is the Platonist most often named because Augustine selects him as a dialogue partner and addresses him directly.

[53] See p. 88, n. 30 above; Kofsky (2002), 263; Lee Williams (2007), 275, n. 17. Clark (2011), 406, notes that to see Porphyry as deeply concerned with refuting Christianity may be a misunderstanding of the philosopher's priorities; Porphyry may have become representative of anti-Christian polemic through reputation and Christian representation.

debate between them about oracles. Porphyry was a learned polymath, a philologist and philosopher who exhibited an open-minded approach and a tendency to ask questions, to quote other writers verbatim and at length, and to give divergent perspectives from various authorities in his writings.[54] While Eusebius also quotes a broad range of writers verbatim and at length (including Porphyry himself), it is vital to recognise that Porphyry's intellectual honesty, openness and philological approach were exploited by Eusebius, who often claims that Porphyry's views are contradictory.[55] One example of the way in which Eusebius exploits and distorts Porphyry's methodological approach and writings in this way will suffice to illustrate this point. Eusebius cites a lengthy oracle of Apollo and Porphyry's accompanying philosophical commentary from *Philosophy from Oracles*: the oracle details the orders (τάξεις) of the gods, and the appropriate sacrifices to offer to specific series of deities, and includes general instructions on sacrificial rituals. [56] Porphyry's introductory commentary shows that he was more concerned to use this oracle as a demonstration of the classification and hierarchy of the gods, rather than to give a justification for blood sacrifice.[57] The next section of commentary discusses the classification of the gods (τάξις): Porphyry asserts that there are four kinds of deities – the underworld or chthonian, the earthly, the aerial and the celestial.[58] Porphyry sets out the appropriate kind of animals which should be sacrificed to each of these orders of deities and then states:

> ἆρ' οὖν δεήσει ἐξηγήσασθαι τῶν θυσιῶν τὰ σύμβολα τῷ εὐσυνέτῳ δῆλα; τετράποδα μὲν γὰρ τοῖς χθονίοις καὶ χερσαῖα· τῷ γὰρ ὁμοίῳ χαίρει τὸ ὅμοιον. χθόνιον δὲ τὸ πρόβατον καὶ διὰ τοῦτο Δήμητρι φίλον, καὶ ἐν οὐρανῷ τὴν ἔκφανσιν ἐκ τῆς γῆς τῶν καρπῶν μεθ' ἡλίου λοχεύει. μέλανα δέ· τοιαύτη γὰρ ἡ γῆ φύσει σκοτεινή. τρία δέ· τοῦ γὰρ σωματικοῦ καὶ γεώδους τὰ τρία σύμβολον.
>
> Then will it be necessary to expound the symbolic meanings of the sacrifices which are obvious to the intelligent? For there are four-footed land animals for the earthly gods, because like rejoices in like. And the sheep is a land animal

[54] Smith (2007), 9–13.

[55] Athanassiadi (1993), 117–118; Magny (2011), 67–69; Kofsky (2002), 274–275. The similarities between Eusebius' and Porphyry's style of citing other authors at length: Kofsky (2002), 84; 251.

[56] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 314F = Eusebius, *PE* 4.8.4–9.2; Porphyry's commentary on this oracle: *Phil. Orac*. 315F = Eusebius, *PE* 4.9.3–7.

[57] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 314F, lines 12–17; Busine (2005), 259; Johnson (2009), 110–111.

[58] Porphyry, *Phil Orac*. 315F = Eusebius, *PE* 4.9.3–7.

> and for that reason dear to Demeter, and in the sky the Ram,[59] with the help of the sun, causes the appearance of the produce of the earth. They must be black, because the earth is that colour, dark: and three, for three is the symbol of the corporeal and earthly.[60]

Porphyry's claim that the 'symbolic meanings of the sacrifices' are clear to the intelligent again suggests the necessity of allegorical exegesis to interpret and construe the hidden, deeper meanings of the oracular responses.[61]

Eusebius asserts that he cites this oracle specifically in order to show that Porphyry contradicts himself regarding animal sacrifice, since in his work *De abstinentia* Porphyry offers injunctions against animal sacrifice:

> Ὁ δὴ οὖν προδηλωθεὶς ἀνὴρ ἐν αὐτοῖς οἷς ἐπέγραψεν "Περὶ τῆς ἐκ λογίων φιλοσοφίας" χρησμοὺς τίθησι τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος, τὰς διὰ ζῴων θυσίας ἐργάζεσθαι παρακελευομένου καὶ μὴ μόνοις δαίμοσιν μηδὲ μόναις ταῖς περιγείοις δυνάμεσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ταῖς αἰθερίοις καὶ οὐρανίοις ζωοθυτεῖν. ἐν ἑτέροις δ' ὁ αὐτὸς δαίμονας, ἀλλ' οὐ θεοὺς εἶναι ὁμολογῶν ἅπαντας, οἷς Ἕλληνες τὰς δι' αἱμάτων καὶ ζῴων ἀλόγων σφαγῆς ἐπετέλουν θυσίας, μὴ χρῆναι μηδὲ ὅσιον εἶναι θεοῖς ζωοθυτεῖν φησίν.
>
> Then the aforesaid author [i.e. Porphyry], in his actual work which he entitled *Of the Philosophy to be derived from Oracles*, gives responses of Apollo prescribing the performance of animal sacrifices, and the offerings of animals not only to *daimones*, nor only to the terrestrial powers, but also to the etherial and heavenly powers. But in another work the same author, confessing that all, to whom the Greeks used to sacrifice by the blood and slaughter of senseless animals, are *daimones* and not gods, says that it is not right nor pious to offer animal sacrifices to gods.[62]

Eusebius assumes that Porphyry agrees with every statement included in the oracles he cites; furthermore, he ignores Porphyry's commentary which shows that the philosopher's interest in the oracle is its presentation of the hierarchy of the gods and the 'symbolic meanings of the sacrifices'; it is not intended as a justification for

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[59] This refers to the astrological sign of Aries, which could be referred to as τὸ πρόβατον, although it was more commonly called ὁ κριός, 'the ram'. Porphyry refers to the sun entering the zodiacal sign of Aries in late Spring, thus considered to signify the appearance of crops. Cf. Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 1.10.28–29; 1.19.41.

[60] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 315F, lines 22–28.

[61] Cf. Chapter 2, pp. 57–71.

[62] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 314F, lines 1–9 = Eusebius, *PE* 4.8.4 (Eusebius' introduction to 314F); 4.10; Kofsky (2002), 255.

blood sacrifice *per se*. Moreover, a closer look at *De abstinentia* reveals that there is actually no contradiction at all since, in that work, Porphyry advises *philosophers* not to eat meat, but admits that in other cases it is entirely appropriate:

> Ἡ τε ἀποχὴ τῶν ἐμψύχων, καθάπερ κἀν τῷ πρώτῳ ἐλέγομεν, οὐχ ἁπλῶς πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις παραγγέλλεται, ἀλλὰ τοῖς φιλοσόφοις, καὶ τούτων μᾶλλον τοῖς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τῆς τούτου μιμήσεως τὴν σφῶν εὐδαιμονίαν ἀνάψασιν.
>
> Abstinence from animate creatures, as I also said in my first book, is not advised for everyone without exception, but for philosophers, and among philosophers chiefly for those who make their happiness depend on God and the imitation of God.[63]

Although *De abstinentia* does include polemic against blood sacrifice, Porphyry's caveat here should serve as a reminder of the distortion to the *Philosophy from Oracles* which results from Eusebius' polemical agenda in citing the oracles.

Oracles as Ritual Instruction: The Correct Observation of Divine Hierarchies

Before examining the implicit pagan–Christian debate between Eusebius and Porphyry, it will be useful to examine some of the key themes in Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*. I will argue that oracles are intimately connected with ritual in the treatise, a link which was distorted and consequently exploited by Eusebius in order to condemn pagan religious practices (and theurgy) by conflating them with dubious and unethical magical practices. Porphyry's link between oracles and ritual relates to Iamblichus' discussion of these phenomena in the *De Mysteriis*, and so some comparison with that work is included in order to illustrate the debates and interactions regarding ritual and divination within Neoplatonism. This examination will provide a clear context within which to examine the pagan–Christian interaction.

Many extant fragments from Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* serve as ritual instruction, with various gods offering mortals advice on the appropriate types of sacrifice for specific deities; the construction and consecration of statues; the genealogies, roles, powers, attributes and symbols of various deities; and the various methods of worship appropriate to specific deities. This type of cultic instruction was a common and traditional function of oracles in Antiquity. Many oracles from at least the fifth century B.C. to the Late Antique period offer similar

[63] Porphyry, *Abst.* 2.3.1; cf. also 1.27.1–2; 2.3.2; 4.5.3, ed. Bouffartigue and Patillon (1979), Vol. 2; trs. Clark (2000).

cultic instruction. For example, we have reports of many such oracles issued from the Oracles of Delphi, Claros and Didyma.[64]

In Fragment 316, Porphyry's commentary explicitly alludes to this function of oracles.[65] He states that the gods themselves have informed us of their mode of life (πολιτεία), presenting the view that the rituals used to worship the gods and all human knowledge of the gods come from the gods themselves. This concurs remarkably with Iamblichus' claim that all knowledge which humans have concerning the gods comes from the gods themselves.[66] In fact, the idea that all ritual and cultic knowledge that humans possess is a 'gift of the gods' remains the central, underlying conceptual foundation of theurgy.[67]

This fragment also suggests that one of Porphyry's aims in the *Philosophy from Oracles* is to deal with the relationships of the various gods with each other (πολιτεία).[68] This concern with the hierarchy and powers of specific deities can be seen in many fragments of the work. For example, another oracle and Porphyry's commentary on it describes the attributes, powers and roles of specific deities:

> Καὶ μὴν ὅ τι ἑκάστῳ ἐπιτέτακται {καὶ τί καὶ τίνι} αὐτοὶ, δεδηλώκασιν, ὥσπερ ὁ Διδυμαῖος διὰ τούτων (ἦν δ' ἡ πεῦσις εἰ δεῖ ὀμόσαι τῷ ἐπάγοντι τὸν ὅρκον)· μητέρι μὲν μακάρων μέλεται Τιτηνίδι Ῥείῃ αὐλοὶ καὶ τυπάνων πάταγοι καὶ θῆλυς ὅμιλος· Παλλάδι δ' εὐπήληκι μόθοι καὶ δῆρις Ἐνυοῦς· καὶ βαλίαις σκυλάκεσσι βαθυσκοπέλους ἀνὰ πρῶνας θῆρας ὀρειονόμους ἐλάαν Λητωΐδι κούρῃ· Ἥρῃ δ' εὐκελάδῳ μαλακὴ χύσις ἠέρος ὑγρῆς· λήϊα δ' εὐαλδῆ κομέειν σταχυητρόφα Δηοῖ· Ἴσιδι δ' αὖ Φαρίῃ, γονίμοις παρὰ χεύμασι Νείλου, μαστεύειν οἴστροισιν ἐὸν πόσιν ἀβρὸν Ὄσιριν.

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[64] Extant Delphic oracular responses giving explicit cultic instruction (I confine this list to extant responses classified by Fontenrose as 'Historical', of which 73% are on divine matters [cult foundations, sacrifices, offerings, religious laws and customs] cf. Fontenrose (1978), 27, who comments that such responses are the most common and frequently attested in inscriptions and historical sources): cf. Fontenrose (1978), 244–267. Eidinow (2007), 72–124, has published many of the tablets from the Oracle of Dodona (dating from the sixth to the second century B.C.) containing questions put to the oracle: her Catalogue contains 146 questions, of which only three directly ask about ritual activity; however, fourteen further questions ask 'by aligning himself with which of the gods will X be successful?' 'To what god should I sacrifice/pray to do X successfully?' Oracle centres issuing cultic and ritual instruction in Late Antiquity: Busine (2005), 94–100; 159–170.

[65] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 316F = Eusebius, *PE* 5.10.13–11.1.

[66] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.3 (7.10–8.9); 1.15 (48.4–8).

[67] Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 1.12 (40.14–41.8; 42.5–7); 1.14 (44.8–45.3); 1.15 (47.3–9; 49.3–5); *Chald. Or.* F108.

[68] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 316F, line 3. Cf. Smith (1997), 30.

> [Porphyry:] 'Now what has been assigned to each, they themselves have shown, as the Didymaean [Apollo] [said] in the following words (the enquiry was, if it is necessary for the person administering the oath to swear the oath as well): "*Auloi* and clattering drums and a female rout are cared for by Titan Rhea, Mother of the blessed ones, while Pallas [Athena] with the beautiful helmet has battle-din and Enyo's contest, and Latona's daughter's care is to hunt mountain-frequenting beasts with her dappled hounds over the deep-cragged headlands; melodious Hera has the soft gush of moist air, Deo takes care of luxuriant cornfields which nourish ears of corn, and moreover Pharian Isis, by Nile's fruitful stream, seeks with agony her soft husband Osiris."'[69]

Porphyry's introductory remarks show that this oracle originated from Apollo's Oracle at Didyma. This oracle gives details of the attributes and powers of Rhea, Athena, Artemis, Hera, Demeter and Isis, but appears to be missing its final term, which would have probably stated that Zeus cares for the oath and fidelity towards it, thus relating the response to the enquirer's question.[70] A further set of oracles alludes to the mythical genealogies of the gods: in two fragments, Apollo gives details of his and Artemis' birth on the island of Delos;[71] in a further fragment Asclepius is said to give an oracle, which begins with the god referring to his mythological birthplace, Tricca, Thessaly;[72] in another fragment Hermes speaks of his divine parentage.[73] These oracles help to illuminate the relationships of the gods to one another and their hierarchical order. The lengthy oracle of Apollo discussed above details the orders (τάξεις) of the gods, the appropriate sacrifices to offer to specific series of deities, and general instructions on sacrificial rituals.[74] Porphyry's statement at the beginning of this oracle indicates that his commentary and possibly some of the oracles in *Philosophy from Oracles* commented on piety (εὐσεβείας).[75] This may well have included instructions for inner preparation and contemplation which complement the external, ritual instructions detailed in oracles such as this one. Unfortunately, the oracles and commentary on piety do not survive but if they had, they might have given instruction for the correct mode of inner preparation and attitude towards the gods similar to that detailed in Porphyry's *Letter to Marcella*, which deals extensively with inner piety and

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[69] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 309F, lines 3–12 = Eusebius, *PE* 5.6.4–5.

[70] Fontenrose (1978), 426.

[71] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 310F = Eusebius *PE* 3.14.3–4; 311F = Eusebius *PE* 3.14.5. Cf. Busine (2005), 258.

[72] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 312F = Eusebius *PE* 3.14.6.

[73] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 313F = Eusebius *PE* 3.14.7.

[74] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 314F = Eusebius *PE* 4.8.4–9.2.

[75] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac*. 314F, line 13.

worship.[76] Thus, Porphyry's statement suggests that inner preparation and piety were dealt with in *Philosophy from Oracles*, in all likelihood as a complementary and interlinked phenomenon to the external cultic instruction.

The order and hierarchy of the gods is explicitly discussed in another oracle, given by Apollo's Oracle at Didyma, which states that Pan is a servant of Dionysus.[77] This oracle can firmly be placed in the section of Porphyry's work dealing with the πολιτεία of the gods.[78] Apollo answers the inquiry of some country folk about the fate of nine foresters found dead in the woods. Apollo's oracle asserts that the survivors were saved only through the intervention of a higher power, Artemis, who now becomes an important guardian for them. Porphyry is not primarily interested in this, but rather cites the oracle to show the subordinate relationship of Pan to Dionysus; the ending is probably cited to show the subordination of Pan to Artemis, since her intervention overrules him in this case.[79] Overall, many surviving oracles in the *Philosophy from Oracles* deal with the divine hierarchy (πολιτεία) of the gods and their relationships to each other.

Oracles and Theurgic Ritual

Within Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*, various fragments attest to the fact that the oracles of the gods themselves issued instructions for the construction and consecration of their cult statues.[80] Taken as a whole, these fragments suggest that Porphyry believed that the rituals used to worship the gods and all human knowledge of the nature of the gods, their hierarchy (πολιτεία) and their symbols come from the gods themselves. This accords with one of the most fundamental teachings of theurgy: that ritualistic instructions (including instructions for the consecration and animation of statues, a well-known theurgic practice) and

[76] Porphyry, *Marc.* 9, 11–24 (especially 18), ed. Des Places (1982). Cf. Clark (2007), 139–140, who argues that Porphyry does not allow merit to, and the *Letter to Marcella* does not advocate, traditional religious practice. Even given Clark's argument that for Porphyry 'ancestral tradition' is bloodless sacrifice (140), traditional religious practice involved much more than simply animal sacrifice. In the next section (19), Porphyry seems to be arguing that ritual acts must be accompanied by a pure state of mind and the development of intellectual purity, rather than rejecting traditional ritual altogether.

[77] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 307F, lines 12–24 = Eusebius, *PE* 5.5.7–6.2.

[78] Smith (1997), 30–31; cf. also Busine (2005), 258.

[79] Smith (1997), 30–31.

[80] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 316F = Eusebius, *PE* 5.10.13–11.1; 317F (especially lines 1–3) = Eusebius, *PE* 5.12.1–2; 318F = Eusebius, *PE* 5.13.1–2; 319F = Eusebius, *PE* 5.13.3–4; 320F = Eusebius, *PE* 5.14.2–3; 321F = Eusebius, *PE* 5.14.4–15.4.

knowledge of the divine is given to mortals by the gods themselves.[81] In a whole series of oracles cited by Porphyry the goddess Hekate issues instructions for the consecration of her cult statue.[82] This could well reflect theurgic practice since Hekate was one of the two major deities (the other being Apollo) who utter oracles within the corpus of the *Chaldean Oracles*; within the Chaldean system she was seen as a soteriological goddess who instructed the theurgist with cultic and cosmological instruction.[83] Porphyry's introduction to an oracle attributed to Hekate states:

> Ὅτι δὲ καὶ τὰ ἀγάλματα αὐτοὶ ὑπέθεντο πῶς χρὴ ποιεῖν καὶ ἐκ ποίας ὕλης, δηλώσει τὰ τῆς Ἑκάτης ἔχοντα τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον·
>
> *And that they themselves* [i.e. the gods] *advised how one must construct their statues* and from what kinds of material, will be shown by the responses of Hekate in this manner [my emphasis].[84]

A further fragment also explicitly attests to this idea: while introducing an oracle of Sarapis, Porphyry asserts that the gods have revealed to humans how they manifest with regard to their forms and it is from these revelations that cult statues were consecrated.[85] While introducing an oracle of Pan, Porphyry develops this idea further by suggesting that the gods indicate their symbols (σύμβολα) to mortals for ritual purposes: 'The symbols of Hekate are three-coloured wax ... *For these symbols the gods themselves have revealed in the following verses*' [my emphasis].[86] The oracle of Apollo (discussed above) which details the order of the gods and their appropriate sacrifices also begins with the suggestion that the gods themselves teach humans the correct rituals: 'Friend, who hast entered on this god-given (θεόσδοτον) path, Heed well thy work.'[87] The fact that the enquirer has entered a 'god-given' (θεόσδοτον) path clearly alludes to the idea that the gods themselves teach men how to honour them correctly.

In his commentary on this oracle, Porphyry maintains that one of the main principles for oracular interpretation is the idea that 'like rejoices in like' (τῷ γὰρ ὁμοίῳ χαίρει τὸ ὅμοιον).[88] According to this principle, it is fitting to offer

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[81] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.3 (7.10–8.9); 1.15 (48.4–8). Cf. also 1.9 (30.10–14); 2.4 (76.11); 5.23 (234.1–4); Chapter 1, pp. 34–37; Chapter 7, p. 254.

[82] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac*. 317F; 319F; 320F (Sarapis); 321F.

[83] Cf. Chapter 1, p. 9, n. 36.

[84] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 317F, lines 1–3. Cf. also 319F.

[85] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 318F, lines 1–3. Cf. also 316F, line 3 (discussed above).

[86] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 320F, lines 2–3; 6–7. Cf. Chapter 2, p. 79, for citation of this fragment.

[87] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 314F, lines 17–18.

[88] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 315F, lines 24–25.

to the gods sacrifices of animals which are closest to the specific type of element associated with that deity: for example, Apollo recommends the offering of birds for the sky gods because they are swift.[89] The notion that 'like rejoices in like' is one of the central conceptions underlying the idea of sympathy (συμπάθεια): everything is connected via chains of qualities and attributes on the basis of their resonance and similarity. Since sympathy is such a crucial foundation of theurgic ritual, which attempts to utilise these chains in order to draw the theurgist's soul closer to the intelligible, divine realm, Porphyry's commentary may indicate that he perceives a theurgic foundation underlying this oracle of Apollo. However, caution must be observed, since the idea of sympathy was a common conception in Late Antique ritual practices. As we have seen, Iamblichus specifies that theurgy operates *not only* through the power of sympathy but primarily through divine love (θεία φιλία), which enables *sympatheia* to arise,[90] and Porphyry does not refer to divine love here.

Thus, Porphyry's commentary could indicate that he perceives a theurgic foundation underlying this oracle of Apollo. Iamblichus also cites this principle within his discussion of sacrifices in *De Mysteriis*:

> ὁ δὴ τῆς θρησκείας νόμος τὰ ὅμοια δηλονότι τοῖς ὁμοίοις ἀπονέμει, καὶ διατείνει δι' ὅλων οὕτως ἄνωθεν ἄχρι τῶν ἐσχάτων... τὰ σύμμετρα κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτῶν φύσιν ἑκατέροις ἀποδιδούς.
>
> Now the rule of cult, obviously, assigns like to like, and extends this principle from the highest to the lowest levels ... apportioning to each what is conformable to its own nature.[91]

Busine argues that Porphyry's vision of the order (τάξις) of the divine world clashes with the theurgic stance of Iamblichus, since Iamblichus replies to Porphyry that one cannot connect the gods to certain places in the world, because they are incorporeal and are not present in body in a local manner; rather, these superior beings are always where they wish to be.[92] However, a closer examination reveals no substantial contradiction between Porphyry's commentary and the views of Iamblichus. Porphyry's question to Iamblichus in the *Letter to Anebo* had

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[89] Porphyry, *Phi. Orac.* 315F, line 31. Porphyry makes the same point in *Abst.* 2.34.1: 'But we shall make, as is fitting, different sacrifices to different powers' (ἀλλὰ θύσομεν, ὡς προσήκει, διαφόρους τὰς θυσίας ὡς ἂν διαφόροις δυνάμεσι προσάγοντες). Cf. Busine (2005), 260–261.

[90] Cf. Chapter 1, p. 29 and n. 151; n. 154.

[91] Iamblichus, *DM* 5.20 (227.13–14; 228.1–2). Cf. also *DM* 3.20 (148.4–9), which explicitly discusses the application of this principle to divination.

[92] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.8; Busine (2005), 262.

involved the assignment of *different bodies* to gods, *daimones* and souls.[93] This does not have much bearing on Porphyry's commentary on Apollo's oracle, which is rather suggesting that certain animals, locations and elements of the cosmos are *sympathetically connected* with specific gods. Iamblichus argues that the gods rule bodies from the outside and so are superior to bodies in a *causal* sense: thus, gods do not suffer the change and temporality to which bodies are subject, even though bodies participate in and receive divine power from the gods; furthermore, the gods give characteristic properties to bodies rather than receiving characteristics from them, since the gods are causally superior, eternal and stable.[94] This closely concurs with Porphyry's commentary, which suggests that different types of sacrificial animals and different elemental locations are sympathetically connected with the gods but nowhere suggests that the gods are present in these elemental locations in a local manner or are tied to them. Elsewhere, Iamblichus makes exactly this point:

> Αὕτη τοίνυν ἐάν τε μοίρας τινὰς τοῦ παντός, οἷον οὐρανὸν ἢ γῆν, ἐάν τε πόλεις ἱερὰς καὶ χώρας, ἐάν τε καὶ τεμένη τινὰ ἢ ἱερὰ ἀγάλματα διαλαγχάνῃ, πάντα ἔξωθεν ἐπιλάμπει, καθάπερ ὁ ἥλιος ἔξωθεν φωτίζει πάντα ταῖς ἀκτῖσιν. Ὥσπερ οὖν τὸ φῶς περιέχει τὰ φωτιζόμενα, οὑτωσὶ καὶ τῶν θεῶν ἡ δύναμις τὰ μεταλαμβάνοντα αὐτῆς ἔξωθεν περιείληφεν.
>
> So then, whether we are talking about the *assignment of regions of the universe, such as heaven or earth*, or of cities or localities consecrated (to one deity or another), or even of precincts or sacred statues, the fact is that divinity illumines everything from without, even as the sun lights everything from without with its rays. Even as the sunlight, then, envelops what it illuminates, so also does the power of the gods embrace from outside that which participates in it [my emphasis].[95]

Thus, Porphyry's commentary does not contradict theurgic conceptions of sympathy and causality, but rather implicitly supports a theurgic framework and application of these ideas. Overall, it is difficult to judge the extent to which Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* provides an explicit theurgic framework for the ritual practices to which it refers; but none of the surviving fragments contradict key theurgic concepts and frameworks, at the very least, and some of them

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[93] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.8 (23.8–11).

[94] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.8 (24.2–6).

[95] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.9 (30.10–15); cf. also 5.24 (234.12–235.3), where Iamblichus discusses the division of divine influence around the regions of the earth and the fact that specific gods preside over specific regions of the earth.

(particularly oracles where deities issue instructions for statue construction and consecration) are suggestive of a theurgic framework.

Oracles on Divination and Divine Inspiration

Certain oracles within Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* also discuss the ritual involved with divination and divine inspiration; thus, they are self-reflective. In one oracle, Apollo describes how divine πνεῦμα is able to enter the body of a prophet, since his soul was faultless (ἀμωμήτοιο). The oracle describes the light of Apollo which, in response to the prayers and songs of the ritual, enters the head of the prophet and travels to his throat where it causes the prophet to speak.[96] Here, Apollo insists on the purity of the soul-receptacle.[97] There is a similarity here with Iamblichus' insistence on the necessity for the theurgist to purify and enhance his or her receptivity so as to be able to receive the energy and the emanations of the gods. For this oracle, we also have a section of Porphyry's commentary:

> Τούτων οὔτε σαφέστερα οὔτε θεϊκώτερα καὶ φυσικώτερα γένοιτ' ἄν. πνεῦμα γὰρ τὸ κατιὸν καὶ ἀπόρροια ἐκ τῆς ἐπουρανίου δυνάμεως εἰς ὀργανικὸν σῶμα καὶ ἔμψυχον εἰσελθοῦσα, βάσει χρωμένη τῇ ψυχῇ, διὰ τοῦ σώματος ὡς ὀργάνου φωνὴν ἀποδίδωσιν.
>
> Of these things, there could not be anything clearer or more divine and more in accordance with nature; for that which comes down is spirit, and an outpouring from the heavenly power into an organic, living body, and it comes using the soul as its basis, and produces a voice through using the body as its instrument.[98]

Porphyry's comments on the process of divine inspiration leading to divination concur closely with those of Iamblichus in *De Mysteriis* 3. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, the idea that divine illumination comes from without and is exterior to the prophet is clear in Iamblichus' account of divination.[99] Porphyry here seems to agree with this view: he describes the divine 'spirit' (πνεῦμα) which comes down to the prophet, and the 'outpouring of heavenly power'.

Busine argues that there is a disagreement between Porphyry and Iamblichus with regard to their views on divine inspiration here since Porphyry emphasises that the divine power uses the *body* of the prophet as its instrument, while Iamblichus

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[96] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac*. 349F = Eusebius, *PE* 5.8.11–12.

[97] Busine (2005), 272.

[98] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac*. 349F, lines 8–12.

[99] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.7 (115.5–7); 3.8 (117.1–5); 3.11 (125.2–3; 125.6–8; 126.13–127.3); 3.12 (129.1–4); 3.19 (146.7–10). Cf. Chapter 6, pp. 222–226.

emphasises that the prophet's *soul* receives the divine power.[100] However Porphyry also assigns an important role to the soul as a receptacle for the divine inspiration: 'it comes using the soul as its basis'.[101] Likewise, although it is true that in his account of the Oracle of Claros, Iamblichus states that the inspiration of the god illuminates the prophet's soul, in his account of the prophetess at Delphi, Iamblichus specifies that 'she gives herself absolutely to the divine spirit, and is illuminated by the ray of divine fire' which 'envelops her entirely in a circle'.[102] This suggests that the divine inspiration fills the Pythia's soul *and* body, according to Iamblichus. Also, his emphasis on the necessity of the prophetess' ritual preparations at Didyma, including her bathing, fasting and withdrawal into the *adyton* of the temple, demonstrates that the body of the prophet(ess) must be in a state of pure receptivity as well as their soul.[103] Such a view is implicit within Iamblichus' schema of divination: he states explicitly that the human soul, intellect *and* body do have a role in divination, but they are auxiliary, lower causes,[104] which need to be in a receptive, purified state in order to receive the inspiration of the god, who works through them.[105] Iamblichus explicitly asserts that the gods use the soul, intellect and body of the prophet 'as instruments' (ὡς ὀργάνοις), using almost identical terminology to that of Porphyry: 'and it comes using the soul as its basis, and produces a voice through using the body as its instrument (ὡς ὀργάνου)'.[106] While Porphyry may emphasise the role of the body as instrument somewhat more than Iamblichus, both philosophers clearly saw the prophet's soul *and* body as being filled with divine inspiration.

Another theme discussed in *Philosophy from Oracles* was the possible inaccuracy of oracles. A section of Porphyry's commentary is quoted alongside an oracle of Apollo:

> Καὶ τὸ περιέχον ἀναγκάζον ψευδῆ γίνεσθαι τὰ μαντεῖα, οὐ τοὺς παρόντας ἑκόντας προστιθέναι τὸ ψεῦδος. πολλάκις γοῦν προλέγουσιν ὅτι ψεύσονται· οἱ δὲ μένουσι καὶ λέγειν ἀναγκάζουσι διὰ τὴν ἀμαθίαν. εἶπε γοῦν ὁ Ἀπόλλων ποτέ, τοιαύτης οὔσης τῆς καταστάσεως, ὡς ἐδείξαμεν, πονηρᾶς τοῦ περιέχοντος· κλεῖε βίην κάρτος τε λόγων· ψευδηγόρα λέξω.

[100] Busine (2005), 275.

[101] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac*. 349F, line 11.

[102] Claros: Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (126.1–3); Delphi: *DM* 3.11 (126.7–10). Cf. Chapter 7, pp. 256–257.

[103] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (127.10–13). Cf. also 3.11 (125.11–126.1).

[104] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.7 (115.4–11). Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* 1.2.5 (982a25–29); 1.3.1 (983a24–32); 2.1.7 (993b26–31); 2.2.8–9 (994b6–16).

[105] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.7 (114.13–115.2; 115.2–5); 3.7 (115.8–11). Cf. also Chapter 7, pp. 244–247.

[106] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.7 (115.4–5).

> [Porphyry:] Also it is the surrounding atmosphere that compels the oracles to be falsified, and not that the deities present deliberately add the falsehood. For they often declare beforehand that they are going to speak falsely: but the inquirers persist, and compel them to speak, because of their folly. Apollo, for instance, once upon a time, when the condition of the atmosphere was, as we stated, unfavourable, said: 'Cease from these words of power, I will speak false.'[107]

Porphyry states that lower, physical conditions can prohibit or distort the correct reception of oracles and can cause oracles to be false, rather than this inaccuracy coming from the gods themselves.[108] This concept of all the necessary conditions on different ontological levels being in the appropriate state for oracles to be true concurs with Iamblichus' assertions that the lower, auxiliary causes of the body and soul of the prophet have to be in a purified and thus appropriate state in order to receive the inspiration of the god fully, otherwise the oracle will be false and no longer divine:

> Ἐπειδὰν δ' ἡ ψυχὴ προκατάρχῃ ἢ μεταξὺ κινῆται, ἢ τὸ σῶμά τι παρεμπίπτῃ καὶ τὴν θείαν ἁρμονίαν ἐπιταράττῃ, θορυβώδη γίγνονται καὶ ψευδῆ τὰ μαντεῖα, καὶ ὁ ἐνθουσιασμὸς οὐκέτι ἀληθὴς ὑπάρχει οὐδὲ γνησίως θεῖος.
>
> But when the soul takes the initiative, or is disturbed during the divination, or the body interrupts and perverts the divine harmony, the divinations become turbulent and false, and the possession is no longer true nor genuinely divine.[109]

Thus, Iamblichus and Porphyry agree that lower, physical conditions have to be in an appropriate and purified state in order to fully receive the inspiration of the god and in order for the oracle to be true.

However, rather than discussing the soul and body of the prophet in his commentary above, Porphyry in this case refers to the 'condition of the surrounding atmosphere' (καταστάσεως τοῦ περιέχοντος) being 'unfavourable' (πονηρᾶς). As discussed below, the phrase 'surrounding atmosphere' (τὸ περιέχον) refers to astrological conditions, such as the position of the stars. This suggests that this oracle refers to a ritual undertaken during unfavourable astrological conditions. Indeed Porphyry immediately cites another oracle which makes the same point more explicitly:

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[107] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac*. 341F, lines 2–7 = Eusebius, *PE* 6.5.2–4.

[108] Cf. Busine (2005), 276.

[109] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.7 (115.8–11).

καὶ ὅτι ταῦτα ἀληθῆ ἐστιν ἅπερ ἔφαμεν, δηλώσει τὰ λόγια. ἔφη γοῦν τις κληθεὶς τῶν θεῶν· σήμερον οὐκ ἐπέοικε λέγειν ἄστρων ὁδὸν ἱρήν· ἕδρανα μαντοσύνης γὰρ ἐν ἄστρασι νῦν πεπέδηται.

[Porphyry:] And that what I was saying is true, will be shown by the oracles. For example, one of the gods when invoked made an answer: 'Today it is inappropriate to speak of the sacred course of the stars. The seats of prophecy are now fettered in the stars.'[110]

Here we see a god specifying that it is the wrong time for an oracular ritual since the astrological conditions are inappropriate at that time for the true oracles of the gods to reach humans in a pure state: they would be distorted and falsified by the astrological conditions. Another oracle within the *Philosophy from Oracles*, attributed to Hekate, also depicts the deity refusing to speak because the astrological conditions are unfavourable.[111] Iamblichus discusses the necessity of choosing the appropriate moment to perform theurgic rituals in *De Mysteriis*. Taking his cue from Egyptian astrologers and priests, he refers to the appropriate time (καιρός) at which theurgic rituals should be undertaken:

...ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ τῆς ἱερατικῆς θεουργίας ἀναβαίνειν ἐπὶ τὰ ὑψηλότερα καὶ καθολικώτερα καὶ τῆς εἱμαρμένης ὑπερκείμενα παραγγέλλουσι πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ δημιουργόν, μήτε ὕλην προσποιουμένους μήτε ἄλλο τι προσπαραλαμβάνοντας ἢ μόνον καιροῦ παρατήρησιν.

...but they recommend that we ascend through the practice of sacred theurgy to the regions that are higher, more universal and superior to fate, towards the god who is the creator, without calling in the aid of matter or bringing to bear anything other than the observation of the critical time for action.[112]

As Dorian Greenbaum notes, 'this is clearly a reference to katarchic astrology, which includes choosing the right astrological moment (καιρός) to begin something. Iamblichus privileges this form of divination as an aid to the theurgic practice of becoming more divine'.[113] Thus both Porphyry and Iamblichus engage in discussion of the correct timing of oracular ritual according to the principles of katarchic astrology, which both considered to be a vital factor in the preparation

[110] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac*. 341F, lines 8–11.

[111] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 342F = Philoponus, *De Opificio Mundi* 201.18–202.16. Cf. the discussion of this oracle below, pp. 121–122.

[112] Iamblichus, *DM* 8.4 (267.6–10).

[113] Greenbaum (2009), 10.

of ritual if one wished to receive true oracles directly from the gods, without distortion from lower, atmospheric conditions.

Given that these oracles and commentary all refer to the correct timing, order and other necessary conditions of ritual in order for the prophet to be fully receptive to divine inspiration to enable correct divination, these oracles probably comprised the section of the work devoted to 'the practice of divination' (τῆς χρηστικῆς πραγματείας) alluded to in Porphyry's prologue.[114] Indeed, given the scope of the oracles and commentary cited above, an important concern of the *Philosophy from Oracles* is to discuss ritual and cultic instruction, including the operation of divination. This close connection between the content of the oracles and ritual discussed by Porphyry in the work is exploited by Eusebius in order to cast doubt on the legitimacy and ethical basis of all types of pagan religious ritual.

The Debate between Porphyry and Eusebius: Pagan and Christian Perspectives

There are two central elements in Eusebius' polemical agenda to refute the veracity, usefulness and worthiness of paganism and pagan oracles and to establish the superiority of the Christian faith. Both elements were used by later Church Fathers such as Augustine and became major *topoi* in anti-pagan, Christian polemic in Late Antiquity. The first (and most well known) involved the Christian identification and conflation of pagan gods with evil *daimones*, which had a long history in early Christian tradition. Eusebius attempts to use the evidence of Porphyry's oracles to show that the pagan gods are wicked *daimones* with limited, self-centred and evil powers. The fact that Eusebius does not utterly dismiss the validity of pagan oracles but attributes their veracity to evil *daimones* who want to cause harm to mortals shows that he had an ambivalent attitude towards pagan prophecy and, to some extent, recognised oracular worth.[115] This makes Eusebius typical of the Late Antique religious, cultural and intellectual milieux in which he lived and wrote: belief in invisible powers and the power of oracles and divination was common and embedded in everyday life, even if the origin and utility of these types of divination were vehemently disputed.[116] At the same time, it also indicates that the tradition of oracles was too deeply rooted to be undermined by a direct and frontal attack on their veracity and validity.

The second, less well known, but equally pervasive element, involved the conflation of magic with theurgy and religious ritual. By equating pagan religious and theurgic practices with magical practices (those designated by the

[114] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac*. 303F, lines 25–26. Cf. Chapter 2, p. 45, n. 7.
[115] Kofsky (2002), 144–145; Potter (1994), 55.
[116] Kofsky (2002), 144; Martin (2004), 212.

rubric γοητεία), Eusebius hoped to discredit pagan practices by showing their dubious ethical basis.[117] However, a more pervasive element of Eusebius' agenda is clear in his comments on Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles:* by conflating theurgic and religious invocation with magical compulsion of the gods, Eusebius attempts to discredit completely the power of the pagan gods by showing them to be subject to external, human compulsion and willpower. Thus, he seeks to discredit paganism by arguing that pagan gods have very limited power and can be subordinated to human beings. Furthermore, by conflating theurgy and more generally, pagan ritual, with magic, Eusebius seeks to show theurgic and ritual practices to be irrational, in sharp, dualistic opposition to rationality. This obscures the 'supra-rational' basis of theurgic ritual as described by Neoplatonist philosophers such as Iamblichus.[118]

Eusebius' Polemical Agenda: Conflation of *Daimones* and Gods

One of the clearest elements in Eusebius' polemical agenda against paganism involved his identification of the pagan deities with evil *daimones* (who would later become the 'demons' of Christianity); this conflation can be seen in much of Eusebius' citation of and commentary on Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*. This identification, which had started at the latest in the second century A.D. (although Christian writers used Biblical passages to support the notion), represents an important *topos* of Christian polemic throughout Late Antiquity and had a pervasive legacy in the medieval period.[119]

The nature of *daimones* had frequently been discussed throughout the history of the Platonic tradition. Diotima's discussion of their nature in Plato's *Symposium* seems to have been taken as the definitive benchmark by later Platonist philosophers: Plato comments on the intermediary status of *daimones*: they transport and interpret human things to the gods and divine things to mortals. In particular, they are attributed with the transportation of sacrifices made by mortals to the gods as well as conveying all divination from gods to humans.[120] This idea

[117] Kofsky (2002), 145.

[118] Cf. Chapter 5, pp. 188–189, 192–198; Chapter 7, pp. 272–275.

[119] Ephes. VI.12, cited by Eusebius, *PE* 5.3.1.1–4; Cor. X.20 cited by Eusebius, *PE* 5.16.20; Tertullian, *Apology* 23; Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 26; Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 14.1; 54.1–10; 57.1; *Second Apology* 5.5–5.6. A similar conflation had previously been utilised by Origen in his polemic against the pagan Celsus: Origen, *Contra Celsum* 5.4–5; 1.3; 3.29; 3.36–7; 4.92; 7.69; 8.25–6; 8.33. Martin (2004), 177–186; 188, notes that Origen drew on Jewish and Christian rhetoric which had already identified the gods of 'the nations' with malevolent and dangerous *daimones.* Cf. Parke and Wormell (1956a), 289; Kofsky (2002), 138.

[120] Plato, *Symp.* 202e–203a.

links divination and sacrifice as related religious phenomena, conceptualised as rituals linking the divine and mortal realms through the agency of *daimones*. Drawing on this passage, Plutarch also refers to *daimones* as being located midway between gods and mortals. For Plutarch, *daimones* could be either good or evil.[121] Porphyry also discusses good and evil *daimones* in his *De abstinentia*, detailing the role of good *daimones* in bringing divination and oracular truth to mortals from the gods.[122] For both Porphyry and Plutarch, in keeping generally with Graeco-Roman religious tradition, *daimones* are distinct and separate beings from gods, even if they act as messengers and intermediaries for them.

The Christian polemical agenda sought to conflate gods and *daimones*, seeking to show all pagan deities to be nothing more than evil *daimones*. This agenda is clearly detectable in Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*: he emphasises the pagan worship of 'evil powers' (τὰς πονηρὰς δυνάμεις)[123] and contrasts the pagan oracles with the 'true' Christian prophecies which never call any *daimon* good and say that there is one true god who is the One Cause of all.[124] He sets out his aim to examine 'the kind of power' behind the pagan oracles, concluding that Apollo is actually an evil *daimon* and repeatedly asserting that all pagan gods and *daimones* are actually evil.[125] Consequently, these claims enable him to maintain that all oracles are given by evil *daimones*.[126] After citing an oracle of Hekate and a section of Porphyrian commentary from the *Philosophy from Oracles*, Eusebius argues that the pagan gods have been found to be *daimones* who are limited in power, confined to the earth and enslaved to passions.[127] After citing another fragment of Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*, Eusebius states:

> περὶ δὲ τοῦ δαίμονας εἶναι πονηροὺς ἀληθῶς, ἀλλ' οὐδὲν ἀγαθὸν ἐπαγομένους τοὺς παρὰ τοῖς πολλοῖς θεολογουμένους φέρε ἔτι μᾶλλον διὰ πλειόνων κρατύνωμεν.

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[121] Plutarch, *De def. or.* 415a1–3; 416c4–f7; *De facie quae in orbe lunae apparet* 944c–d; *De Is.* 360d9–f9; 361a12–b8; 361c. Cf. Brenk (1977), 85–112; Dillon (1977), 216–224.

[122] Porphyry, *Abst.* 2.37–43; cf. especially 2.38.3.

[123] Eusebius, *PE* 4.5.3.1–4; 4.1.1–4.5.4. Cf. Kofsky (2002), 138–139; Martin (2004), 211.

[124] Eusebius, *PE* 4.5.4; 4.17.1–2; 4.21.3.

[125] Eusebius, *PE* 4.6.1.1–3; Apollo as an evil *daimon*: *PE* 4.10; 4.14.10;4.20.2.1–2; all pagan gods and *daimones* are evil: *PE* 4.10.3.3–4; 4.15.3–4; 4.16.20–27; 4.17.1–2; 4.17.4; 4.17.6–7; 4.21.1–2; 4.21.4; 4.21.6; 4.22.13–15; 4.23.8; 5.1.1.1–4; 5.1.16; 5.2.1–4; 5.3.1–9; 5.7.6.10–12; 5.18.4.

[126] Eusebius, *PE* 5.1.1; 5.3.10.

[127] Cf. Kofsky (2002), 256–257.

> But by still more evidence let us go on to confirm our argument, that those who are by many regarded as gods are in reality wicked *daimones*, bringing with them no good at all.[128]

Thus, one of the central aims of Eusebius' polemical agenda is to demonstrate that the pagan gods are evil *daimones* who wish to do harm to mortals, rather than being beneficent deities.

Eusebius' Demonology and Use of Oenomaus of Gadara's *Detection of Imposters*

Eusebius cites many extracts from Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* and sets them against other Porphyrian works with the aim of demonstrating that Porphyry holds contradictory views. Having cited large extracts from the *Philosophy from Oracles* in *PE* 5, Eusebius turns to cite Oenomaus of Gadara's *The Detection of Imposters*.[129] Within this work, Oenomaus, a Cynic philosopher of the second century A.D., launched a direct attack on oracles, claiming that he had received a false prediction from Apollo's Oracle at Claros, who had given the same oracle to a merchant from Pontus called Callistratus.[130] Oenomaus also uses examples from Greek literature in order to try to prove that oracles from the past as well as those in the present do not benefit anyone, parodying famous oracular responses.[131] He criticises the credulity of people who believe in divination and treats Apollo as a 'sophist'.[132]

Eusebius cites Oenomaus' sceptical attack on oracles in order to add further weight to his characterisation of the pagan gods as evil *daimones* who lie to and deceive humans through oracles. To this end, Eusebius cites this work extensively before returning to citation of Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* in *PE* 6. It is clear that one purpose of this juxtaposition is to prove that Porphyry had been refuted by others before Eusebius began his polemical work; moreover, Eusebius aims to show that Porphyry had already been refuted by a philosopher within the pagan tradition itself, evidence which he cites as proof of significant contradictions among pagan philosophers concerning the subject of oracles.[133] What Eusebius fails to mention is the rarity of ancient scepticism about oracles: ancient sources do

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[128] Eusebius, *PE* 5.23.9. Cf. also Eusebius, *PE* 4.19.8–20.1, citing Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 329F.

[129] Eusebius, *PE* 5.18.6ff.

[130] Oenomaus, F14 = Eusebius, *PE* 5.22.1–6. Cf. The dating of Oenomaus: Chapter 1, p. 14, n. 66.

[131] Oenomaus, F15 = Eusebius, *PE* 5.23.1–3; F2 = *PE* 5.34.2–17; F6 = *PE* 5.24; F7 = *PE* 5.25.1–8. Cf. Parke and Wormell (1956b), xi–xii; Potter (1994), 52–54.

[132] Oenomaus, F8 = *PE* 5.26.1–3.

[133] Cf. Edwards (2011), 217–232; Kofsky (2002), 140–142.

question the veracity and legitimacy of oracles, but the divine source of the oracle is not often questioned in itself, although there were a few who were sceptical.[134] Furthermore, Eusebius clearly fails to understand (or deliberately obscures) the open-minded and questioning approach of ancient philosophers, who often debated important religious issues as a matter of course.[135] This methodological point relates to important differences between the early Christian tradition and traditional Graeco-Roman religion, the latter of which had no orthodoxy or dogma as Christianity did, but has been characterised as 'orthopraxic'– concerned with correct action.[136] Thus philosophy was the natural corollary of pagan ritual practices in Late Antiquity; it was philosophers who had traditionally debated and discussed religious issues and the underlying philosophical conceptions and cosmologies which ritual practices might presuppose and imply.

Eusebius' Polemical Agenda: Conflation of Magic, Religion and Theurgy

Even more pervasive in the Late Antique Christian polemical agenda was the conflation of pagan ritual – particularly theurgy but any kind of religious ritual which involved invocation of the gods – with magical practices. During Late Antiquity, magical practices were often viewed, at least by Christian authors, as compelling and constraining the pagan gods. This conflation is evident in Eusebius' polemical arguments utilised against Porphyry in his citation of *Philosophy from Oracles*. For example, after citing an oracle attributed to Hekate, Eusebius cites Porphyry's commentary:

> οὐ μόνον δ' ὅτι φίλοι οἱ χαρακτῆρες δεδήλωκεν, ἀλλ' ὅτι καί, ὅπερ ἔφαμεν, αὐτοὶ περιγράφονται καί εἰσιν οἷον ἐν ἱερῷ χωρίῳ τῇ ὑποκειμένῃ εἰκόνι· οὐ γὰρ ἐπὶ γῆς ὀχεῖσθαι, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ γῆς ἱερᾶς ἐδυνήθησαν· ἱερὰ δὲ ἡ εἰκόνα φέρουσα θεοῦ, ἧς ἀρθείσης λέλυται τὸ κρατοῦν ἐπὶ γῆς τὸ θεῖον.
>
> He has made it clear not only that the representations are dear to them, but that also, as I said, the gods themselves are confined therein, and dwell in the underlying likeness as it were in a sacred place: for they could not be supported on earth, but on sacred ground they could: and that ground is sacred which bears

[134] Cf. Chapter 1, p. 11, n. 46.

[135] Eusebius' characterisation of the Greek tradition as a persistent fragmentation into disjointed and incoherent philosophical wrangling: Johnson (2007), 111–113.

[136] Cf. for example, Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel (1989), 27.

> the image of the deity; but if the image is taken away, the bond which held the deity on earth is loosed.[137]

After citing Porphyry's comments, Eusebius concludes that magical images confine the gods to certain physical places.[138] His polemical agenda claims to show that the pagan gods can be bound, forced and compelled by human beings.[139] Therefore they are subject to humans and so are limited in power and cannot be good because they are subject to passion.

Did Porphyry really think this was the case? There are at least three important reasons which suggest that he did not. Firstly, Porphyry does not necessarily agree with or endorse every detail of the oracles which he cites.[140] Secondly, the central argument of Eusebius – that the gods can be compelled by humans and thereby are subordinate to them – would have sounded ridiculous to Porphyry, who primarily identified himself as a Platonist. Following Plato, who sees the gods as inhabiting the intelligible realm and as the source of all goodness, no Platonist philosopher would admit that the gods could be 'compelled' or 'forced' to do anything by a human.[141] This is because of the Platonic insistence on the immutability of the divine: if the gods could be 'compelled', they would have to have a changing and temporal nature in the realm of becoming, rather than existing in the realm of being. To a Platonist philosopher, such a supposition would be absurd, since by their very nature the gods were thought to be immortal and thus immutable and eternal. Porphyry's *De abstinentia* makes a point about the justice and goodness of divinity which is relevant to this discussion:

> δέον ἐμπέδως πεπεῖσθαι ὅτι οὔτε τὸ ἀγαθὸν βλάπτει ποτὲ οὔτε τὸ κακὸν ὠφελεῖ. "Οὐ γὰρ θερμότητος, ὥς φησι Πλάτων, τὸ ψύχειν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ ἐναντίου·" οὕτως οὐδὲ "τοῦ δικαίου" τὸ "βλάπτειν." Δικαιότατον δὲ δήπου φύσει πάντων τὸ θεῖον, ἐπεὶ οὐδ' ἂν ἦν θεῖον.
>
> But one must be firmly convinced that the good never harms and the bad never benefits. As Plato says, 'cooling is not done by heat but by its opposite,' and similarly 'harm is not done by the just man.' Now *the divine power must by nature be most just of all, or it would not be divine* [my emphasis].[142]

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137 Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 321F, lines 8–12.

138 Eusebius, *PE* 5.7.3; 5.15.4.

139 In almost all of the following citations Eusebius uses the term γοητεία to describe the ritual practices laid out in the oracles and Porphyry's commentary: *PE* 5.7.3; 5.8.13; 5.9.10; 5.9.11; 5.9.16; 5.14.3–4; 5.15.5; 6.4.3.

140 Cf. Smith (1997), 29; O'Meara (1969), 8, n. 9.

141 Plato, *Leg.* 10.885b6-10; 888c2-7; Dillon (2007), 30–31.

142 Porphyry, *Abst.* 2.41.1–2, ed. Bouffartigue and Patillon (1979), trs. Clark (2000).

Here, Porphyry seems to take it for granted that the gods, by their intrinsic nature, must be just. In his *Letter to Marcella*, Porphyry explicitly asserts that the gods must be good:

> καλοῦ δὲ ὄντος τοῦ θείου ἀμήχανον αὐτῷ σὺν κακίᾳ πελάζειν· "καθαροῦ γὰρ μὴ καθαρὸν ἐφάπτεσθαι οὐδὲν ὁ Πλάτων φησὶ "'θεμιτὸν" εἶναι.
>
> Now since the divine nature is good, it is impossible for it to consort with vice, since Plato says that it is unlawful for the impure to approach the pure.[143]

It seems clear that the idea that the gods could be 'compelled' by a mortal who might have morally dubious and unjust motivations would be anathema to Porphyry.

Thirdly, caution must be exercised when examining ideas of 'binding' in ancient Graeco-Roman religious, ritual and magical practices. For example, curse tablets (*katadesmoi*), a common feature of the Graeco-Roman world for many centuries, often advocate the 'binding' of one's object of love, rival, enemy or other personage.[144] It has recently been argued that this type of 'binding' should not be taken in a literal sense but is likely to have had a far more figurative meaning. We have some evidence that certain cult statues of specific deities were bound in chains at sanctuaries, yet the evidence points to a symbolic rather than a literal meaning.[145] For example, an inscription from Pamphilian Syedra in Asia Minor contains an oracular response ordering the city of Syedra to set up a statue of Ares being bound by Dike and Hermes and to establish an annual festival at which they ritually bind the statue.[146] Such a ritual practice is not necessarily to be seen as prophylactic magic meant to bind and thus incapacitate a demonic Ares: rather, the oracle makes it clear that Ares, bound in this manner, will actively ensure the protection *and* prosperity of their land. Thus, it seems as though this ritual is aimed at harnessing and 'binding' the *divine power* of Ares to ensure protection.

Given all of these important considerations, it seems far more likely that Porphyry is discussing the fact that statues of deities 'bind' or in some sense harness

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143 Porphyry, *Marc.* 9.17–19, trs. Zimmern (1986). Material excerpted from Porphyry's *Letter to his Wife Marcella* © 1986 by Phanes Press with permission of Phanes Press c/o Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC Newburyport, MA and San Francisco, CA www.redwheelweiser.com. A similar conception of the divine nature as good: *Chald. Or.* F15 (=Proclus, *In Remp.* 1.27.27–28); Iamblichus, *DM* 1.18.

144 Cf. Faraone (1991), 3–32; Strubbe (1991), 33–59; Versnel (1991b), 60–106; Gager (1992); Eidinow (2007).

145 Pausanias, 3.15.7; Gonzales (2005), 279–280; *contra* Faraone (1992), 54–56; 74–78; 136–140.

146 Gonzales (2005), 279–280. Cf. also Faraone (1991), 9; 75–76.

divine *power* (rather than divinity itself) to a particular location. For pagans, divine power was a vital and ever-present feature of the divine. The debates and dialogues among pagan philosophers suggest that they were concerned with appropriate and inappropriate methods of ritual power, rather than with 'compelling' the gods. Thus, on philosophical grounds it seems unlikely (at best) that Porphyry would possibly advocate or even think it possible that the gods could be compelled or forced by humans. Such a view would go against his most basic philosophical views as a Platonist.

'Persuasive Necessity' and Theurgic Invocation

However, some of Porphyry's commentary does seem to imply that he may be endorsing, in some sense, the compulsion of the gods in ritualistic practices:

> Ὀρθῶς καὶ τοῦτο ὁ Ῥόδιος Πυθαγόρας ἀπεφήνατο, ὅτι οὐχ ἥδονται οἱ κληζόμενοι ἐπὶ ταῖς παρουσίαις θεοί, ἀνάγκῃ δέ τινι ἀκολουθίας συρόμενοι παραγίνονται, καὶ οἱ μὲν μᾶλλον, οἱ δὲ ἧττον. τινὲς δὲ καὶ ἔθος ὥσπερ ποιησάμενοι τῆς ἑαυτῶν παρουσίας εὐμαρέστερον φοιτῶσι, καὶ μάλιστα ἐὰν καὶ φύσει ἀγαθοὶ τυγχάνωσιν· οἱ δὲ κἂν ἔθος ἔχωσιν τοῦ παραγίνεσθαι, βλάβην τινὰ προθυμοῦνται ποιεῖν, καὶ μάλιστα ἐὰν ἀμελέστερόν τις δοκῇ ἀναστρέφεσθαι ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν. τοῦ γὰρ Πυθαγόρου ταῦτ' εἰρηκότος παρετήρησα ἐκ τῶν λογίων ὡς ἀληθές ἐστιν τὸ εἰρημένον. πάντες γὰρ δι' ἀνάγκην φασὶν ἀφῖχθαι, οὐχ ἁπλῶς δέ, ἀλλ' οἷον, εἰ χρὴ οὕτω φάναι, πειθανάγκην.
>
> Pythagoras of Rhodes also declared this correctly, that the gods who are invoked with a view to their presence have no pleasure therein, but are dragged to come by a certain necessity of attendance, and some of them more, and some less. Some however, having made as it were a custom of being present, come more easily, and especially if they also happen to be good by nature. But others, even if they have a custom of being present, are eager to do some harm, and especially if any one seems to be negligent in the rituals. For as Pythagoras has made these statements, I learned by close observation of the oracles, how true these words are. For all the gods say that they have come by necessity, but not simply so, but rather, if I may so speak, by persuasive necessity (πειθανάγκην).[147]

Porphyry quotes his source, Pythagoras of Rhodes, who states that the gods who are invoked 'have no pleasure therein' (οὐχ ἥδονται). While this could

[147] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 347F, lines 3–13 = Eusebius, *PE* 5.7.6–8.7.

indicate that Porphyry (and Pythagoras of Rhodes) thought that humans could compel the gods to appear and that this is against their wishes, it is important to remember that for Platonist philosophers, the gods were considered to be impassive; they are not subject to passions and so could not feel pleasure or pain.[148] In his *Letter to Marcella*, Porphyry himself entreats Marcella to turn away from passion if she is to draw close to the divine since it is pure and uncorrupted by passion.[149] Porphyry says that some are eager to do harm, especially if any human is negligent in the rituals. This echoes Iamblichus' warning that any error in a ritual can subvert the whole ritual.[150]

Porphyry's comments here show similarities with his questions in his *Letter to Anebo*: Porphyry had asked Iamblichus whether it was 'through being drawn down to us by the necessities of our invocation that the superior being accomplishes these things' (ὅτι δι' ἡμῶν ἑλκόμενος ἀνάγκαις ταῖς τῆς κλήσεως ταῦτα ἐπιτελεῖ.).[151] However, near the end of the commentary (as quoted above), Porphyry states that the gods have not merely come by necessity (implying compulsion from the human ritual practitioner) but rather, that they have come down through πειθανάγκην, which roughly translates as 'persuasive necessity'.[152] What does Porphyry mean when he postulates a distinction between 'necessity' (δι' ἀνάγκην) and 'persuasive necessity' (πειθανάγκην)? This idea shares certain similarities with ideas expressed in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* regarding the nature of ritual. Just as Iamblichus interprets 'divine wrath' metaphorically as a consequence of human withdrawal or rejection of the gods rather than as a truly divine anger, so he uses the terminology of 'persuasion' to describe the effects of ritual, in the sense of persuading the gods that the ritual practitioner has attained the necessary receptivity to receive them:

> Εἴ τε νενόμικέ τις τὴν ἀπόληψιν τῆς προστασίας ἐπεισάγειν τινὰ αὐτόματον βλάβην, ἡ διὰ τῆς ἐκθύσεως πειθὼ τῶν κρειττόνων, εἰς κηδεμονίαν ἀνακαλουμένη πάλιν αὐτῶν τὴν εὐμένειαν καὶ ἀποτρέπουσα τὴν στέρησιν, παντελῶς ἂν εἴη καθαρὰ καὶ ἄτρεπτος.

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148 Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 1.11 (37.13–16); 3.18 (145.6–8; 145.10–13).

149 Porphyry, *Marc.* 9.11–23.

150 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.7 (115.8–11); 3.6 (113.1–5); 3.31 (176.11–177.5). Cf. Chapter 1, p. 35, n. 185.

151 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.18 (145.5–6); 3.18 (145.6–8; 145.10–13).

152 Following the translation of Majercik (1989), 27; 135; 219: 'Although the Chaldeans freely used the current vocabulary of conjuration they did not then claim to have power over the gods, as the gods themselves had communicated the very spells which would bind them … Porphyry uses the apt phrase "persuasive necessity" to convey this same sense of gentle persuasion (as opposed to the active coercion of the magician)' (27).

> And if anyone thinks that the cutting off of protective care automatically brings with it some harm, then the *persuasion* which expiatory rites exercise upon the higher classes of being, recalling them once again to care and goodwill towards us, and averting the deprivation of this, would be entirely pure and immutable. [my emphasis][153]

In his discussion of invocations, Iamblichus had maintained that the gods are superior to necessity and so are not drawn down by the 'necessity' of the invocations; rather, he claims, the invocations and names *ascend* to the gods through assimilation.[154] Iamblichus claims that ritual acts have an inherent 'doubleness': from one perspective, they are performed by humans; yet, from another perspective, all humans have a divine element in their soul.[155] Theurgic ritual, by using symbols such as the 'unknowable names', activates this divine element of the human soul. The ritual utterance operates as a powerful speech-act, enabling the human to assume a divine role by ascending, through similarity, to the divine.[156] Yet this process is only possible because of the gods' providential nature: they constantly shed their divine light on those who attain insight into them.[157] This is an expression of the divine love (θεία φιλία), which is the ultimate cause of theurgy: theurgy stimulates this love by means of symbols; thus it is often characterised as persuasion of the will of the gods.[158] According to Iamblichus' explanation, the 'unknowable names' and invocations are a display of knowledge and receptivity which serve to bring the ritual practitioner into alignment with the power of the god invoked, thus enabling him or her to actively participate in that divine power. This process of alignment is thus described by Iamblichus as 'persuasion'.

Could Porphyry have a similar conception of ritual invocations since he differentiates between 'necessity' and 'persuasive necessity'? Immediately after his commentary (cited above), he cites an oracle of Hekate which suggests he could well have a similar conception of the operation of invocations:

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153 Iamblichus, *DM* 1.13 (44.4–7).

154 Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 1.11 (38.8–10); 1.12 (41.13–42.4; 42.7–13); 1.13 (43.6–9); 1.15 (47.13–48.3). Cf. Addey (2011a), 279–294; (2012), 133–150.

155 Iamblichus, *DM* 1.12 (41.9–13); 7.4 (255.13–256.2).

156 Iamblichus, *DM* 1.12 (41.5–6; 12–13); 1.15 (47.15–48.3); 7.4 (255.7–9); Finamore (1999), 93; Struck (2004), 211; Addey (2011a), 279–294.

157 Iamblichus, *DM* 1.12 (41.3–8); cf. also 1.12 (40.14–41.2; 42.5–7); 1.14 (44.8–11); 1.15 (49.3–5). Cf. Finamore (1999), 87–88; Dillon (2007), 35.

158 Theurgy as persuasion of the will of the gods: Iamblichus, *DM* 1.12 (42.5–13): 'harmonious persuasion' (πειθοῦς ἐμμελοῦς) (42.11); 1.13 (44.4–8) (discussed above); 1.14 (44.8–45.3); Van den Berg (2001), 72.

> ἠέριον μετὰ φέγγος ἀπείριτον ἀστεροπληθὲς ἄχραντον πολὺ δῶμα θεοῦ λίπον ἠδ' ἐπιβαίνω γαίης ζωοτρόφοιο τεῇς ὑποθημοσύνῃσι πειθοῖ τ' ἀρρήτων ἐπέων, οἷς δὴ φρένα τέρπειν ἀθανάτων ἐδάη θνητὸς βροτός.
>
> I have left the star-filled and pure house of the gods for the infinite air of light and I am setting foot on the life-nourishing earth at the request of the persuasion of your ineffable invocations by which mortal men have learnt to delight the heart of the immortals.[159]

Hekate states that she has come down 'at the persuasion of your ineffable invocations' (πειθοῖ τ' ἀρρήτων ἐπέων), a phrase clearly denoting the 'unknowable names' and invocations. A fragment of the *Chaldean Oracles* which contains the injunction not to change the barbarian names concludes by asserting the names 'have ineffable power in the initiation rites' (δύναμιν ἐν ταῖς τελεταῖς ἄρρητον ἔχοντα).[160] Nothing in this oracle suggests that the gods are compelled by necessity by the invocations of humans; rather, Hekate suggests that these unutterable invocations are recognised by the gods who choose to answer the request of the ritual practitioner.[161] This concurs with Iamblichus' notion that the invocations allow the human to have access to the gods because of the gods' beneficent nature. The next oracle of Hekate cited by Porphyry adds further support to this notion:

> ἦλυθον εἰσαΐουσα τεῆς πολυφράδμονος εὐχῆς, ἣν θνητῶν φύσις εὗρε θεῶν ὑποθημοσύνῃσιν.
>
> I have come hearing the sound of your wise prayer, which the nature of mortals has found by the advice of the gods.[162]

The statement that wise prayers and invocations have been found by mortals through the advice of the gods concurs with Iamblichus' continuous emphasis on the fact that the unknowable names, invocations and other symbols are discovered

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159 Porphyry, *Phil. Orac*. 347F, lines 15–18.

160 *Chald. Or.* F150 = Psellus 122.1132. Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 4.2 (184.9); 6.6 (246.13; 247.4–5).

161 Cf. the comments of Majercik (1989), 27, 219: 'Both these expressions (πειθοῖ τ' ἀρρήτων ἐπέων and πειθανάγκην) underscore the non-compulsive aspect of theurgy (in contrast to traditional magic), where the gods appear of their own volition and not at the command of the adept' (219). Cf. also *Chald. Or.* F140 (=Proclus, *In Tim*. 1.212.12–18).

162 Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 347F, lines 18–20.

by humans only because they are given by the gods.[163] The notion that all symbols and tokens were given as a gift of the gods to humans acted as the central foundation of theurgic ritual.[164]

Other fragments cited in Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* show stronger elements of 'compulsion' on the gods.[165] However, one has to be cautious about trying to extract Porphyry's views simply from the oracles he cites, since his reasons for citing specific oracles are frequently unclear from the few extant fragments, and the lack of context is considerable.[166] One such oracle attributed to Hekate states:

> τίπτε μ' ἀεὶ θείοντος ἀπ' αἰθέρος ὧδε χατίζων θειοδάμοις' Εκάτην με θεὴν ἐκάλεσσας ἀνάγκαις;
>
> Why have you, always desirous in this way, called me, the goddess Hekate, from the ever-gleaming ether by god-taming necessity?[167]

The deprecatory and moralising tone used by Hekate here may indicate that she is admonishing the theurgist who dared to use unsanctioned means to accomplish the ritual rather than being content to await the voluntary manifestation of the gods.[168] Porphyry could well have cited all of those oracles which seem to allude to a 'compulsion' of the gods in order to advise the philosopher of *inappropriate* ritual methods and to clarify the relationship between divine and human worlds. However, since little Porphyrian commentary on these oracles is extant, the precise context in which the oracles were cited remains uncertain.

Oracles and Astrology: Astrology in the *Philosophy from Oracles*

Astrology, an important type of divination in Late Antiquity, played a significant role within *Philosophy from Oracles*. We know that Porphyry was thoroughly familiar with astrology: he is reported to have written an introduction to Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*, an extant handbook of astrology, although authorship of this introduction is disputed and somewhat uncertain.[169] In his treatise *On the*

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[163] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.21(65.3–8); 7.4 (254.13–255.1); 7.5 (258.3–5; 259.12–13). Cf. Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 58, n. 184; 39–47; 467–471; Majercik (1989), 27.

[164] *Chald. Or.* F108; F150; F214.

[165] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac*. 347F, lines 20–31; 348F = Eusebius, *PE* 5.8.8–10; 350F = Eusebius, *PE* 5.8.13–9.9.

[166] Cf. Smith (1997), 29.

[167] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac*. 347F, lines 20–22.

[168] Johnston (1990), 132.

[169] Smith (1993a), 490: Εἰσαγωγὴ εἰς τὴν Αποτελεσματικὴν τοῦ Πτολεμαίου; 2T = *Suda*, Πορφύριος IV.178.14–179.2: Εἰσαγωγὴν ἀστρονομουμένων ἐν βιβλίοις

Cave of the Nymphs, Porphyry refers to astrological theory.[170] In his *Letter to Anebo*, Porphyry had addressed a series of questions about astrology to Iamblichus; some are concerned with the relationship between the planets and the incorporeal gods, while others concern the possibility of recognising the personal *daimon* of an individual through their natal horoscope and the Master of the House within the natal horoscope.[171] In his now fragmentary treatise *On What is Up to Us*, Porphyry details the seven spheres which souls pass through in their descent into a mortal body, each sphere inciting the soul with different desires.[172]

One of the extant oracles from *Philosophy from Oracles* issues astrological ritual instructions, raising the possibility that similar oracles utilising astrological configurations were also included within this work. Further oracles show ritual instruction from the gods regarding inappropriate and appropriate astrological configurations to undertake divination rituals. However, by far the most common utilisation of astrology within the extant fragments of the work involves the use of astrology within oracular responses for divinatory purposes. There are several astrological oracles extant from this work, almost all of which are attributed to Apollo, a somewhat surprising fact, given that the extant evidence of oracular responses from sanctuaries of Apollo throughout Antiquity suggests that astrology was not used within oracles (at least at Greek oracular sanctuaries) prior to this Porphyrian work. However, there is some evidence that astrology was used within the oracular temples of Sarapis in Graeco-Roman Egypt in the first, second and third centuries A.D.[173] Since Porphyry's work also included oracles attributed to Sarapis it is likely that he drew on this tradition of astrological divination.

Astrology in Pagan and Christian Cosmology

Before examining the role of astrological oracles within the *Philosophy from Oracles*, it is important to consider the context and reasons for which they were cited by the Christian authors who preserve them. These extant astrological oracles are cited by Eusebius and the later Christian philosopher John Philoponus (c. A.D. 490–c.574) for polemical purposes. Both cite these oracles as support for their argument against the legitimacy of pagan oracles and against the gods to whom these oracles are attributed. According to their polemical line of argument, the gods use astrology to make prognostications about the future within their oracles. Astrology, according to these Christian authors, is a *human* tool and invention,

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[170] Porphyry, *De antr. nymph.* 21–24; 28.

[171] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.17 (50.12–13); 1.18 (52.14–53.1); 1.19 (57.3–4); 9.3; 9.5. Cf. Greenbaum (2009).

[172] Porphyry, 271F (Smith), lines 68–71 = Stob. 2.8.42.

[173] Cf. Evans (2004), 1–44.

since it is based on human inference and mathematical calculations regarding the positions of the planets and the fixed stars.[174]

This argument seeks to undermine pagan oracles on two fronts: firstly, by undermining their legitimacy and authority since they are viewed as utilising human tools and calculations which would be easily obtainable from elsewhere without the necessity of recourse to oracles. It also challenges the authority and power of the pagan deities who are seen as using an 'inferior' human tool and therefore lacking intrinsic power. This line of argument contributes towards the Christian characterisation of the pagan gods as 'evil *daimones*'.[175] An implicit assumption inherent within this argument is that the movements of the planets are seen as *causing* the human phenomena which they predict. Thus astrology (and, by implication, the oracles which utilise astrology) is viewed by these authors as fatalistic, with the pagan gods being subject to the power of Fate since they use astrology in order to give oracles.[176] Eusebius draws a contrast here between the pagan deities and the Christian God: the Christian God is above Fate and is therefore the true Lord of the world and of history; Eusebius promised freedom from Fate to the man who turned and put his faith in the Christian God.[177]

Since we do not have Porphyry's complete work it is difficult to judge the complete context within which Porphyry cited these astrological oracles, and any philosophical concepts pertaining to this issue remain difficult to reconstruct. However, drawing on Porphyry's other works and relevant material from Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*, a philosophical picture of the use of astrological oracles can be tentatively reconstructed. Firstly, within the astrological framework current in Porphyry's time, the planets were considered to be the physical bodies of the gods. Within a theurgical context, planets were viewed as symbols of the gods and as physical manifestations of the Olympian deities.[178] Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* includes a discussion of this issue in response to Porphyry's question in the *Letter to Anebo*: 'What is it that attaches these entities possessing a body in the heavens to the incorporeal gods?'[179] Iamblichus maintains that the gods envelop the heavenly bodies so that each of these planets, 'follows in the train [of the god] naturally and somehow by its own motion'.[180] From this perspective, the gods would not have been considered to be subject to Fate, itself measured and caused by the movements of the planets, since the nature of the gods themselves is reflected in and *causes* the movements and natures of the planets. In other

[174] Eusebius, *PE* 6. Preface; 6.1; Chesnut (1977), 62–63.

[175] Cf. Kofsky (2002), 257.

[176] Eusebius, *PE* 6.2; 6.3.

[177] Eusebius, *PE* 6.3.5 (240c); Chesnut (1977), 63.

[178] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.17–19; especially 1.17 (50.13–51.2); 1.18 (52.13–14); 1.19 (57.8–13).

[179] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.19 (57.3–4).

[180] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.17 (51.6–7).

words, from a Neoplatonist perspective, the Christian authors have inverted the appropriate order of causation: according to them, the gods are subject to the planets while according to the Neoplatonists, the planets are subject to the gods. This notion accords with the theurgic worldview, according to which, 'all things are full of gods', or, in other words, all things are connected with the gods through the power of divine love and sympathy.[181] The notion of astrology as a specifically human science would also have been challenged by the theurgic worldview, which envisaged astrology as much more of an art than a science and primarily as a 'gift of the gods' – a system given to mortals by the gods just as any other knowledge of the gods and their cult is considered to be a god-given gift to humanity.[182]

Astrological Ritual Instructions

Some of the extant oracles from the *Philosophy from Oracles* issue astrological ritual instructions, based on the correct time to undertake particular rituals according to broadly astrological criteria. These oracles are again based on the idea that the gods issue cultic instructions to mortals regarding their correct worship. Thus, they share their context with many other oracles within Porphyry's work which issue cultic instructions to the enquirer. As we have seen, oracles issuing cultic instruction were common throughout Antiquity. Such ritual instruction, which could be considered a key purpose of oracles, was intended to enable humans to align the human world with the divine realm. One of the main oracles to include astrological ritual instruction states:

> κλήζειν Ἑρμείην ἠδ' Ἥλιον κατὰ ταὐτὰ ἡμέρῃ Ἡελίου, Μήνην δ' ὅτε τῆσδε παρείη, ἠδὲ Κρόνον καὶ Ῥέαν ἠδ' ἑξείης Ἀφροδίτην κλήσεσιν ἀφθέγκτοις, ἃς εὗρε μάγων ὄχ' ἄριστος, τῆς ἑπταφθόγγου βασιλεύς, ὃν πάντες ἴσασιν·
>
> Invoke Hermes and the Sun together on the day of Helios, and the Moon when she appears after this, and Kronos and Rhea and Aphrodite in turn, with unspeakable invocations, which by far the most excellent king of Mages discovered, of the seven-toned lyre, whom all men know.[183]

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[181] Thales, F91 (=Arist. *De an.* A5, 411a7), trs. Kirk, Raven and Schofield (1957; repr. 1983). Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 1.9.

[182] Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 9.4 (277.9–278.8); 9.5 (279.5–15); 7.3 (253.2–6). Cf. also Shaw (2007a), 89–102.

[183] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 330F, lines 5–9 = Eusebius, *PE* 5.14.1.

This oracle is also cited identically by John Philoponus, although his commentary differs slightly from that of Eusebius.[184] The oracle advises the enquirer(s) on the appropriate days or times to invoke and thus worship specific deities.

A further fragment contains either one extended oracle or a pair of oracles: it shows Hekate's reluctance to speak to those who have invoked her in unfavourable astrological conditions:

> Ἡ τε Ἑκάτη κληθεῖσα ἐν τοιαύτῃ καταστάσει τοῦ περιέχοντός φησιν· οὐ λαλέω, κλείσω δὲ πύλας δολιχοῖο φάρυγγος νυκτὸς γὰρ κέντροις ἀχρειοτάτοις προσελαύνει Τιτηνὶς κερόεσσα θεὴ κακὸν Ἄρη ἰδοῦσα. Καὶ πάλιν" φησί "τινῶν εἰπόντων, εἰ καὶ αὐτοὶ οἱ θεοὶ ὑπὸ τὴν εἱμαρμένην εἰσίν, ὅτι φυλάττονται ταῦτα, ἐπήγαγε· λυέσθω φύσεως δεσμῶν, ἵνα σοῖσι πίθωμαι. ὦ κραδίη, τί λέληκας, ἀναλκείῃσι τυπεῖσα; Οὐ ποθέεις μαθέειν, ὅ σε μὴ θέμις ὧδ' ἐρεείνειν; Στῆτε πόθου· παύσασθε βίης τυτθοί περ ἐόντες."
>
> And Hekate, when invoked in such an unfavourable atmosphere [constellation], says: 'I do not speak, I shall shut the gates of the long throat, for in the night the horned goddess Titania drives towards the most unpropitious goads of night, looking at malignant Ares.' 'And again,' he [Porphyry] says, 'when some people asked whether the gods themselves are under (the dominion of) destiny (εἱμαρμένην), as they guard against these things, she added': 'Release yourselves from the bonds of Nature, in order that I will be persuaded by your bonds! Oh heart, what do you say, while stricken with feebleness? Do you not long to learn, that which is not lawful for you to ask in this manner? Cease from your desire. Stop your force, although you are weak.'[185]

In the first oracle, the goddess Hekate says that she will not speak because of unfavourable astrological conditions: Titania (the Moon) is 'looking at' (ἰδοῦσα) Ares. In ancient astrology, this refers to an unfavourable aspect (an astrological term used to describe the relationships between planets) between the Moon and the planet Ares (Mars).[186] This oracle means that the Moon is moving towards an unpropitious place in the sky, and in a bad aspect to Ares, and this is why Hekate is refusing to speak. There also seems to be a pun based on the word κέντρον, the ancient astrological term for the 'angles' of the horoscope, which has a more generic meaning in Greek of 'stinging goad'. Thus, the Moon drives towards a

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[184] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 330aF = Philoponus, *De Opificio Mundi* 200.2–7.

[185] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 342F, lines 1–10 = Philoponus, *De Opificio Mundi* 201.18–202.16.

[186] I am indebted to Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum for her invaluable advice on ancient astrological terms and conventions.

stinging goad, which at the same time is also one of the angles of the horoscope.[187] Since it is specified as an unpropitious angle, this term probably refers to the *Imum Coeli* or the Descendant, which were considered to be the less propitious angles. Hekate's statement that she 'will shut the gates of the throat', clearly does not refer to her own mouth, but to that of the human recipient – the prophet(ess) – through whose intermediary she speaks.[188] This oracle concurs with theurgic doctrine, since an underlying notion of these systems is that the gods themselves communicate to mortals the various rituals for invoking them.[189] Within this oracle, Hekate issues ritual instructions regarding the appropriate and inappropriate times to invoke her, based on astrological principles.

The astrological configuration mentioned by Hekate (the Moon aspecting the planet Mars) seems to mirror exactly the circumstances of this ritual. Among her many attributes, Hekate was considered to be the goddess of the Moon in Antiquity. The ritual practitioner(s) has invoked her in inappropriate conditions, trying to 'force' the epiphany of a deity, an action which ancient astrological texts would associate with the planet Mars, often linked with force, willpower and aggression.[190] This mirroring shows the idea of sympathy (συμπάθεια) in action within a ritual context.

The second oracle contained within this fragment seems to concur with the first fragment, stating that the reason for the questioner's failure to attain an oracle from Hekate is the fact that the questioner is bound by 'Nature'. In other words, the oracular answer specifies that mortals, and not the gods, are 'bound by Nature' or, in other words, ruled by the stars.[191] This concurs with theurgic notions, whereby most mortals are considered to be 'bound' within the realm of nature and so ruled by the stars and planets, while theurgists have the ability to raise their soul to the divine realm.

Astrological Oracles

Some of the astrological oracles use natal astrology in order to make predictions. In one fragment we hear that Apollo was asked about the gender of a child to be born. His response uses the astrological horoscope for the time of conception:

> Ἐρωτηθεὶς ὁ Ἀπόλλων τί τέξεται ἡ γυνή, ἐκ τῶν ἄστρων εἶπεν ὅτι θῆλυ, ἐκ τοῦ σπορίμου ἐπιγνοὺς χρόνου. λέγει δὲ οὕτως· ἐκφύεται

[187] I am indebted to Dorian Giseler Greenbaum for this excellent suggestion.
[188] Cf. Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 54.
[189] Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 54.
[190] Cf. Vettius Valens 1.1.21–2; Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 2.8.85.
[191] Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 54.

γαίηθεν ὁδῶν, ὅθι λείμακες ὄμβρου διψοσύνῃ κατέμαρψαν ὅλον πόμα μητέρος αὐτῆς ἔνδον ὀρινομένης χρόνον ἄρκιον, οὔ τι δὲ κοῦρον, ἀλλὰ κόρην· Φοίβη γὰρ ἐΰσκοπος ἤροσεν ἁγνὴν Κύπριν, ἐπειγομένην θῆλυν γόνον, ὦ φίλε, σεῖο. ἰδοὺ καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ σπορίμου, ὅτι σελήνη ἐπὶ Ἀφροδίτην ἐφέρετο, εἶπεν ὅτι θῆλυ γεννηθήσεται.

[Porphyry:] Apollo, on being asked whether the woman would give birth to a boy or a girl, replied from the stars that it was female, learning it from the time of conception. And he spoke thus: 'The shoot is born from the paths of the earth, where grassy meadows thirsting for heavy rain have completely seized the drink of the mother herself, when she is stirred within at a certain time, and it will not be male, but female. For far-seeing Phoebe [i.e. the Moon] traverses holy Cypris [i.e. Aphrodite], who is overpowered. Your child is female, my friend.' [Porphyry:] 'Observe then from the conception, that since Selene [i.e. the Moon] approaches Aphrodite, he said that a female will be born.'[192]

The oracle foretells that the child will be female since the Moon is 'with Venus'. Porphyry's commentary directly following the oracle states that 'Selene approaches Aphrodite', meaning that the Moon is applying to Venus; and Porphyry's use of the preposition ἐπὶ suggests a conjunction of the Moon and Venus, a strong astrological 'aspect'. Since the Moon is conjunct with Venus (both feminine planets) in the horoscope for the time of conception, a female child would be implied by such an astrological aspect. The first four lines of the oracle also allude to this aspect between the Moon and Venus: the description of a shoot springing from the moist earth which soaks up rain reflects the ancient idea that the planets Moon and Venus are humidifying because they appropriate the moist exhalations of the earth.[193] Thus the first four lines poetically reflect the action of this aspect. A further oracle also refers to the natal horoscope of the enquirer:

Οὕτως καὶ ὁ Ἀπόλλων περί τινος, ἅμα καὶ τὴν περὶ στρατιὰν προθυμίαν ἀφηγούμενος πόθεν αὐτῷ γίνεται, ἔφη· Ἄρεα κραιπνὸν ἔχει γενεθλήιον, ὅς μιν ὀρίνει οὐδέ ἑ ταρχύσει· Ζηνὸς γὰρ ἐπέχραε βουλή, ἣ οἱ κῦδος ἄρειον ἀπ' Ἄρεος εὐθὺς ὀρέξει.

[Porphyry:] Thus also Apollo said about a certain man, explaining at the same time where his eagerness for war comes from: 'He has Ares as a stormy horoscope,

192 Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 333F, lines 2–9 = Eusebius, *PE* 6.1.2–3.

193 Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 1.4.17–18.

> who is stirring him up but will not kill him. For the will of Zeus oracularly proclaimed, which will immediately extend to him warlike renown from Ares.'[194]

The first line of the oracle seems to imply that the planet Mars (or 'Ares' in Greek) is the natal ruler of the subject's horoscope or on the ascendant of the natal chart. Thus, the ancient astrological reading of such a natal ruler would imply that the man has a martial and aggressive character which is used to explain his fondness for war. The fourth-century A.D. writer Firmicus Maternus postulates that those with Mars on the ascendant in a masculine sign will make soldiers.[195] However, the oracle also specifies that the influence of the planet Jupiter (Zeus) within the natal horoscope suggests that he will win glory and success through his warlike pursuits and career. In ancient astrology, Jupiter was thought to be a beneficent planet which brings success and good fortune.[196] Although the oracle does not specify the relationship between Mars and Jupiter within the horoscope, the context would suggest a significant aspect between the two planets. In relation to this, Firmicus Maternus asserts that if the ascendant is in the house of Mars and Mars is found in the same sign and in conjunction (or in favourable aspect) with Jupiter, these features indicate successful war leaders to whom entire armies can be entrusted.[197] Porphyry's oracle concurs closely with this line of interpretation: the ruler of the horoscope is Ares probably aspecting Jupiter, agreeing with Firmicus' interpretation. Three further oracles discuss the strong presence of the planet Saturn in the natal horoscope of the subject of the enquiry as bringing strife and difficulty to the individual in question.[198] In ancient astrology, Saturn was often thought to be a maleficent planet, bringing limitation, difficulty, hardship and suffering.[199] Overall, astrology seems to have played an important role in Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* in relation to cultic instruction for the timing of rituals and in relation to prediction within the oracles themselves.

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194 Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 336F, lines 1–5 = Eusebius, *PE* 6.2.1.

195 Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* 3.4.1 (Monat). Cf. Vettius Valens 1.1.21; 1.1.23, ed. Pingree (1986); trs. Schmidt (1993): 'The star of Ares is significant for violence, wars ... It makes leaders and military campaigns and generals, warriors' (ὁ δὲ τοῦ Ἄρεως σημαίνει βίας, πολέμους... ποιεῖ δὲ καὶ ἀρχὰς καὶ στρατείας καὶ πολεμάρχας, ὁπλιστάς...).

196 Cf. Vettius Valens 1.1.17.

197 Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* 3.4.2.

198 Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.* 334F = Eusebius, *PE* 6.1.4.; 335F, lines 2–5 = *PE* 6.1.5–7; 336F, lines 6–7.

199 Vettius Valens 1.1.7–9; Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* 1.5.19; 2.8.83.

Conclusion

Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* played a key role in pagan–Christian debates and interaction in the late third and early fourth centuries A.D. Whatever the relationship between Porphyry's *Against the Christians* and *Philosophy from Oracles*, the Christians clearly perceived the *Philosophy from Oracles* as an anti-Christian work and viewed Porphyry as their most formidable enemy. Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* may have been specifically instigated by and written for Diocletian's Persecution of the Christians, although this issue remains uncertain. However, given the central role of oracles in catalysing the Persecution, it is unsurprising that the *Philosophy from Oracles* gained such a notorious reputation and became a key object of refutation in Christian apologetic and polemic. Eusebius preserves the largest number of fragments of this work, which were clearly selected in order to further his own polemical agenda. It is vital to bear this methodological issue in mind when examining the debates on oracles between Porphyry and Eusebius. The one-sided nature of this debate and Eusebius' manipulation and distortion of the Porphyrian works which he cites (not to mention the lack of context for fragmentary works) inevitably leads to a certain bias and distortion in modern views of this debate.

Eusebius' agenda in citing *Philosophy from Oracles* includes two central aspects: firstly, he uses the oracles to claim that the pagan gods were actually evil *daimones*. This conflation was a standard *topos* in anti-pagan polemic which was to become even more prevalent among Christian writers in subsequent centuries. Eusebius uses this identification to claim that pagan oracles originate from evil *daimones*, thus undermining their authority and veracity. His citations from Oenomaus' *Detection of Imposters* are used to strengthen this polemic against Porphyry, by demonstrating that pagan philosophers themselves had accused Apollo and his oracles of deception and harm to the clients who consult them. Oenomaus' account is used by Eusebius as further evidence that the oracles are controlled by evil *daimones*, given the identification of such *daimones* with falsehood and deception. Eusebius deliberately cites Oenomaus alongside Porphyry in order to argue for the incoherence of the pagan religious tradition; this polemical strategy misconstrues the role of the philosopher in Antiquity, as well as the inextricably linked nature of philosophy and traditional Graeco-Roman religious tradition in Late Antiquity.

Secondly, Eusebius conflates pagan religious practices (and, seemingly, theurgy) with 'magic' (γοητεία), by claiming that the former are no different from the latter because both attempt to 'compel' the gods. Eusebius was able to posit such a conflation because of the inextricable connection established between oracles and ritual in Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*. As a symbol,

an oracle itself is a significant element of ritual.[200] Within these oral and textual symbols, the gods offer cultic advice and instruction on divination, construction of cultic statues, the timing of divinatory and other types of ritual, and on the nature of the divine heirarchy. Thus, oracles are both a significant part of ritual practice and act as a source of knowledge and wisdom regarding correct ritual praxis. The conflation of pagan religious practices (and theurgy) with γοητεία, dubious magical practices, lies at the heart of Eusebius' polemical attempt to undermine the authority and legitimacy of Graeco-Roman religious practices and theurgy.

Although it remains difficult to ascertain the exact scope of this work due to its fragmentary nature, Porphyry's commentary and his use of specific oracles suggest a worldview that is essentially theurgic. One of the most fundamental tenets of theurgy is that *all* cultic instruction, such as instructions for the consecration of statues, is given to humans by the gods. The extant fragments of *Philosophy from Oracles* frequently attest to such a conceptualisation of ritual practices. Additionally, Porphyry's focus on oracles which detail the symbols and order of the deities, as well as his discussion of the concept of 'persuasive necessity', suggests a theurgic approach towards religious and ritual praxis. It seems that the *Philosophy from Oracles* was much closer to the later religious and theurgic system of Iamblichus than has previously been recognised. Porphyry's broadly theurgic conception of ritual and divination would later be developed much more explicitly by Iamblichus in *De Mysteriis*. However, the roots of many of Iamblichus' theurgic ideas which are applied to ritual and divination are evident in Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles.*

[200] Cf. Chapter 2, pp. 78–80.

Chapter 4
Debating Oracles: Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* and Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*

Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* was written under the guise of the Egyptian prophet 'Abammon' as a reply to Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo*, a work which contained a series of questions on the nature, function and operation of religious ideas and practices, such as divination, sacrifice and theurgy.[1] This letter, apparently written to a pupil of Iamblichus, is preserved only in fragments, extant in the comments of Iamblichus (*De Mysteriis*) and in the reports of Eusebius and others.[2] The fragmentary nature of the letter increases the difficulties in assessing its nature, purpose and tone. The original title of Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* is *The Reply of the Master Abammon to the Letter of Porphyry to Anebo, and the Solutions to the Questions it Contains* (Ἀβάμμωνος διδασκάλου πρὸς τὴν Πορφυρίου πρὸς Ἀνεβὼ ἐπιστολὴν ἀπόκρισις καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ ἀπορημάτων λύσεις).[3] This chapter will focus on the nature of the exchange between Porphyry and Iamblichus in these two works and the implications of this exchange for their views of divination and theurgy.

The general consensus concerning this exchange regards Porphyry as sceptical and dubious about divination, theurgy and other religious practices. The *Letter to Anebo* is generally held to be a scathing and sceptical attack on such practices. This position is influenced by (and forms part of) the orthodox assessment of the relationship between Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus in terms of their religious views: most scholars infer that Porphyry and Iamblichus strongly disagree about ritual practices and tend to see a sharp opposition between the rational and contemplative approach of Plotinus and Porphyry on the one hand and the 'religious tendencies' of later Platonists such as Iamblichus and Proclus on

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[1] Iamblichus, *DM*, 1.1 (3.7–8); Struck (2000), 489; Clarke (2003), xxix–xxxvii; Bussanich (2005), 484–485.

[2] Sodano (1958) has attempted to reconstruct this letter. Cf. Clarke (2003), xxix.

[3] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.1 (1.1–2), trs. Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell (2003), with emendations. Proclus gives us the original title of this work and the appellation is found in Psellus' eleventh-century introduction, printed in Parthey's 1857 edition. The title of Iamblichus' work used today, *De mysteriis Aegyptiorum, Chaldaeorum, Assyriorum*, dates only from the Renaissance and was originally coined by Marsilio Ficino in his 1497 edition and translation; it was subsequently accepted by Scutellius, the second translator of the work into Latin in 1556. Cf. Clarke (2001), 4; 12, n. 1.

the other. This broader picture will be examined in Chapter 5, in which modern conceptions of 'rationality' and 'irrationality', and their relationship with ritual, will be questioned, since such conceptions have deeply influenced, and continue to influence, interpretations of these philosophers and their works. This chapter will focus specifically on Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* and Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*, and will question the extent to which the evidence supports such a view and its general validity. I will argue that this distinction is far too sharply delineated given the nature of the evidence involved.

My central thesis in this chapter is that the exchange between Porphyry and Iamblichus evident in the *Letter to Anebo* and the *De Mysteriis* functions within two traditional genres of philosophy: firstly, within the philosophical genre of 'Problems and Solutions', a method of exegesis common within the Platonic tradition, and, secondly (and more controversially), within the tradition of Platonic dialogue and the dialogic process in general. Furthermore, the significance of these genres for exploring the nature of this exchange between the two philosophers has been underestimated by scholars. I will argue that the exchange between the philosophers is a deliberately constructed dialogue: Porphyry knew the answers to his questions but wrote the *Letter to Anebo* in order to obtain a detailed exposition of 'pagan' religious practices, primarily as an educational and didactic tool for pagans and philosophers, and, secondarily, as a defence of paganism and theurgy against contemporary Christian accusations and criticisms. Thus, I argue that the exchange comprises a mystagogic dialogue and a type of philosophical and religious discourse with protreptic, educational and initiatory functions. Furthermore, the form and structure of this dialogue is connected with and reflects the content of the *De Mysteriis*: since divination plays a key role in theurgy and since divination always involves dialogue, the dialogic structure involving question and answer is particularly suitable for such a discussion.[4] The *persona* of the Egyptian prophet Abammon assumed by Iamblichus becomes particularly appropriate when the *De Mysteriis* and the *Letter to Anebo* are viewed from this perspective, which allows Porphyry's work a greater degree of sophistication and places him more firmly with the Platonic tradition of dialogic discourse; it also calls into question many scholarly assumptions concerning Porphyrian conceptions of oracles, theurgy and religion. This perspective also allows for a more integrated view of Porphyry, as a 'bridge' between the different emphases of the philosophical positions espoused by his teacher Plotinus and his 'pupil' or colleague Iamblichus. However, it is vital to note that the relationship between these two philosophers cannot be judged with certainty (based on current evidence, at least) and *any* assessment of the exchange

[4] Divination generally involves dialogue between the client and diviner or prophet (in question and answer format) but also implicitly assumes a dialogue between the client and/or prophet and a divine being or god. Cf. pp. 157–158, n. 138 below.

is somewhat subjective.[5] Yet this interpretation, which views the exchange between Porphyry and Iamblichus in much broader terms, opens up greater possibilities for locating these works more precisely both within the Platonic tradition itself and within the religious and cultural milieux of Late Antiquity in which they were composed.

The Exchange between Porphyry and Iamblichus

The philosophical dialogue between Porphyry and Iamblichus has predominantly been characterised as a hostile disagreement: Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* is seen as a sceptical attack on divination, theurgy and other religious practices: most scholars view Porphyry as holding a 'rationalist' position on such practices, which follows the philosophical approach of Plotinus.[6] In the most recent edition of Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*, Emma Clarke characterises Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* as 'an epistle which launched a vicious attack on theurgy, more than likely aimed specifically at Iamblichus and his beliefs', although later on she offers a more neutral assessment of Porphyry as a 'genuine man of questions' who 'admitted to changing his mind'; he is intellectually open-minded rather than indecisive.[7] Clarke detects open hostility between the two philosophers, stating that 'it seems ... undeniable that the atmosphere between the *Epistle* and *De Mysteriis* is manifestly hostile, and betrays a considerable tension between the two philosophers'.[8] Gregory Shaw accuses Porphyry of excessive and hubristic rationalism, viewing his stance as being in total opposition to that of Iamblichus, who emphasises the ineffability of theurgic rituals and symbols.[9] However, Polymnia Athanassiadi offers a more nuanced view of the exchange as much more of an amiable, philosophical debate, finding Iamblichus 'not in the least angry at such irreverent questions'.[10] She claims that Porphyry is 'lacking in self-confidence and imagination, with an analytical mind and a naïve avidity for

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[5] A point already made by Dillon (1973; repr. 2009), 10.

[6] Cf. for example, Digeser (2009), 84. Cf. Bussanich (2005), 484, for a comprehensive summary of scholarship on this debate.

[7] Clarke (2003), xxii; xxx–xxxi, n. 59.

[8] Clarke (2001), 7.

[9] Shaw (1995), 13–15; (2007b), 71; 74; (2012), 91–93; Dillon (1973; repr. 2009), 10–11, offers a more moderate assessment of the exchange between Porphyry and Iamblichus, construing it as a matter of scholarly necessity: 'we must not conclude from this that Iamblichus learned nothing from Porphyry, or that they parted on bad terms. The refutation of one's predecessors was a necessary part of staying afloat in the scholastic world, then as now'.

[10] Athanassiadi (1993), 119.

knowledge', the opposite of Iamblichus who strikes her as 'self-possessed, patient, authoritative, and [an] exceptionally understanding teacher'.[11]

Thus, most scholars infer that Porphyry and Iamblichus strongly disagree about religious and ritual practices. This assessment seems to be deeply influenced by the perceived wider opposition between the 'rationalism' of Plotinus and Porphyry on the one hand, and the theurgic approach of Iamblichus and Proclus on the other, often justified with reference to a famous quotation from Damascius:

> Ὅτι οἱ μὲν τὴν φιλοσοφίαν προτιμῶσιν, ὡς Πορφύριος καὶ Πλωτῖνος καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ φιλόσοφοι· οἱ δὲ τὴν ἱερατικήν, ὡς Ἰάμβλιχος καὶ Συριανὸς καὶ Πρόκλος καὶ οἱ ἱερατικοὶ πάντες.
>
> To some philosophy is primary, as to Porphyry and Plotinus and a great many other philosophers; to others hieratic practice, as to Iamblichus, Syrianus, Proclus and the hieratic school generally.[12]

As John Bussanich notes, this citation from Damascius 'is invoked by scholars with the authority of an oracle'.[13] However, the interpretation of this quotation is debatable given the context of the passage in which it occurs: Damascius does not write as if 'philosophy' and 'hieratic practices' are in any way mutually exclusive but rather points to a difference of emphasis between the two sets of philosophers whom he discusses. This important point is confirmed by the punch-line of the passage:

> ὁ δὲ Πλάτων τὰς ἑκατέρωθεν συνηγορίας ἐννοήσας πολλὰς οὔσας εἰς μίαν αὐτὰς συνήγαγεν ἀλήθειαν, τὸν φιλόσοφον Βάκχον ὀνομάζων· καὶ γὰρ ὁ χωρίσας ἑαυτὸν τῆς γενέσεως εἰ τεθείη μέσος εἰς ταὐτὸν ἄξει τῷ ἑτέρῳ τὸν ἕτερον.
>
> Plato, however, recognising that strong arguments can be advanced from both sides, *has united the two into one single truth* by calling the philosopher a 'Bacchus'; for by using the notion of a man who has detached himself from genesis as an intermediate term, *we can identify the one with the other* [my emphasis].[14]

This suggests that Damascius conceived of theurgy and philosophy as part of a continuum rather than seeing them as mutually exclusive, the latter of which is an

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[11] Athanassiadi (1995), 245.

[12] Damascius, *Commentary on Plato's Phaedo* II.I.172.1–3, ed. and trs. Westerink (1977).

[13] Bussanich (2005), 484.

[14] Damascius, *Commentary on Plato's Phaedo* II.I.172.3–6. Athanassiadi (1999), 57, notes that this well-known passage is rarely quoted with its concluding punch-line.

implicit assumption of those who cite the passage as confirmation of the *opposing* and dichotomous stances of the two sets of philosophers.[15] Polymnia Athanassiadi has called into question the opposition possibly implied by Damascius' comment and exploited by scholars:

> Yet the pattern that emerges from these men's writings is different. Whereas for Plotinus and Iamblichus, the highest qualities in the spiritual and the moral spheres respectively are intuition and virtue, and their teaching manner is rather careless, concentrating as it does on the essential, often to the detriment of clarity and detail, Porphyry and Proclus keep good company with the rest of the philosophers mentioned by Damasicus as thinkers attached to the letter either of the Platonic texts under discussion or of cult.[16]

This point is important: a close analysis of their writings does indeed reveal close parallels between Plotinus and Iamblichus who focus on the essential, and also between Porphyry and Proclus, who are deeply analytical and systematic in their writings. It is also vital to remember that many of Porphyry's and Iamblichus' works have been lost, which can lead to a somewhat misleading impression of their output and areas of concern. For example, Iamblichus wrote many commentaries on the works of Plato and Aristotle which no longer survive, as did his Neoplatonic predecessors and successors.[17] If these commentaries were extant, scholarly views of Iamblichus' philosophical merit might be modified.[18]

The Exchange between Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* and Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* as an Example of the Genre of 'Problems and Solutions'

Given the original title of Iamblichus' work, it is commonly accepted that Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* and Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* function within the traditional genre of 'Problems and Solutions' (ἀπορίαι και λύσεις, or ζητήματα).[19] This literary genre was fairly common in the later Platonic tradition. Porphyry himself composed other works within the 'problem–solution' genre: these include his *Questions on Homer*, and a *Collection of Questions on Rhetoric*, as well as a book of *Miscellaneous Questions*, many of which concern philosophical topics. Damascius

[15] Cf. Damasicus, *Philosophical History* F4A, F88 and F150. For a fuller examination of Damascius' attitude towards theurgy and his characterisation of the Neoplatonic tradition: cf. Chapter 5, pp. 181–183.

[16] Athanassiadi (1993), 129.

[17] Cf. Dillon (1973; repr. 2009), for fragments of Iamblichus' commentaries on Plato and a discussion of Iamblichean works (19–25).

[18] Cf. Dillon (1987), 907.

[19] Cf. Clarke (2003), xlvii–xliviii; Saffrey (1971).

composed a work *Problems and Solutions (aporiai kai lyseis) on First Principles.*[20] Proclus also wrote a work within this genre, entitled *Ten Doubts concerning Providence* (*De Decem Dubitationibus circa Providentiam*), which examined the nature of providence (πρόνοια) and its relation to human beings, containing a similar list of questions to those which Porphyry poses in his *Letter to Anebo*; this work is only preserved in a medieval Latin translation.[21] Given the nature of this genre, in which literary or philosophical works generally pose a set of questions and a range of possible solutions for each question, it seems fair to suggest that it was related to, if not directly influenced by, the tradition of Platonic dialogue, as will be discussed further below.

This literary genre stretches back to the early Hellenistic period and beyond. It is documented in the fourth century B.C. in a collection of Homeric Questions attributed to Aristotle. These consist of 'Problems' (προβλήματα) and 'Solutions' (λύσεις) supposedly proposed by Aristotle relating to Homeric matters and ranging from the meaning of a word to apparent contradictions in Homeric narrative.[22] The 'Problem–Solution' format became a constant in literary scholarship, richly reflected in the *scholia* of manuscripts, but many other sorts of προβλήματα are found in the Aristotelian corpus as well, most conspicuously in the massive Peripatetic collection of 'Why' (δία τι;) – questions known as Aristotle's 'Problems'.[23] Plutarch also used the 'Problem–Solution' format for several of his works, including *Greek Questions* (Αἴτια ῾Ελληνικά), *Roman Questions* (Αἴτια ῾Ρωμαϊκά), *Natural History Questions* (Αἴτια φυσικά) and *Platonic Questions* (Πλατωνικὰ ζητήματα). The latter collection is particularly interesting since it comprises short essays dealing with questions that arise from a single Platonic passage or a few related ones, disposing of generally anonymous existing solutions, and proceeding to a new explanation.[24] From these examples, it is clear that the 'Problems and Solutions' format was a fairly common mode of textual discourse within the Platonic tradition. Moreover, this genre bears marked similarities with the role of discourse and dialogue within both philosophy and oracles. The genre reflects Platonic dialogue in that it poses a series of philosophical questions and possible solutions. It also has important similarities with the role of discourse in oracular divination: most oracles were received in response to a specific question, posed by an individual client or community who were in difficulty over a particular problem, issue or practical matter, although an important difference is that the literary genre usually offers a range of solutions whereas a typical oracular

[20] Damascius, *Problems and Solutions Concerning First Principles*, ed. Ruelle (1966). Cf. Clarke (2003), xlviii.

[21] Proclus, *De Decem Dubitationibus circa Providentiam*, ed. Cousin (1864), 76–145. Cf. Rosán (1949), 38.

[22] Lamberton (2001), 24.

[23] Lamberton (2001), 24.

[24] Lamberton (2001), 16.

response would offer one solution. Yet caution is required here, for Porphyry in particular seems to conceive of oracles as multivalent and comprised of multiple levels of meaning in a similar sense to allegorical texts.[25] It is also important to note that most extant works in the 'Problems and Solutions' genre are composed by one philosopher or author, while this exchange occurs between two philosophers. In their exchange, Porphyry and Iamblichus clearly play around with the genre and place their own unique 'twist' upon it by setting up a dialogue between philosophers, yet this in no way undermines the nature of their exchange as an example of this genre.[26]

Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* and Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* as a Dialogue

Porphyry, Iamblichus and Platonic Dialogue

Given the close connections between the 'Problems and Solutions' genre and that of philosophical dialogue, I would like to suggest that Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* and Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* function within the tradition of Platonic dialogue and the dialogic process in general.

The philosophical genre of the dialogue seems to have been, for all practical purposes, the invention of the Socratics, with their teacher as the central protagonist. Plato may not have been the first to utilise dialogue form; we know of at least six other Classical authors who wrote Socratic dialogues, although only those of Plato and Xenophon are extant. The dialogue was a literary genre, and one with sub-genres, including Socrates' Defence Speech (*Apologia*).[27] Whether or not Plato invented the genre of philosophical dialogue, he certainly presents its clearest formulation and used it for the publication of all of his philosophical ideas. The dialogue form is in a sense synonymous with Platonic philosophy: this method of presenting philosophical concepts within the framework of an analytical conversation encapsulates the central traits of Platonic philosophy. Many scholars have inferred that Plato's motive for using the dialogue genre must have been protreptic: the dialogues present intellectual inquiry for the spectator while they invite that spectator to embrace the philosophical life.[28] In this sense, the dialogue lies at the heart of the Platonic tradition as the symbol of intellectual inquiry and 'philosophy in action'. It embodies the spirit of open-

[25] Cf. Chapter 2, pp. 67–71.

[26] This sense of playfulness with genre is clear in Plato's own works; Plato mixes traditional genres of discourse (particularly rhetoric and poetry) into his dialogues: Wilson Nightingale (1995).

[27] Wilson Nightingale (1995), 4–5; Lamberton (2001), 147.

[28] Wilson Nightingale (1995), 194; Lamberton (2001), 148; Blondell (2002), 37–52; Szlezák (2007), 17–19; 26–30. Cf. Long (2008), 48, n. 8.

minded philosophical questioning and intellectual inquiry so essential to both Plato and later Platonist philosophers.

Later philosophers also utilised the genre of the dialogue to expound their philosophical views and concerns: Aristotle, whom the Neoplatonists viewed as being in essential harmony with Plato, wrote perhaps fifteen dialogues that circulated among the general public. Cicero and Plutarch both read these dialogues.[29] Plutarch also wrote many philosophical dialogues in the style of Plato, including some staged at Delphi.[30]

The dialogue tradition and the dialogic process were also central to the teaching methods and practices of Neoplatonist philosophers. We know that Iamblichus taught within his school through answering the questions of his students, discussion sessions and probably, in more formal discourses, propounding the questions and picking an interlocutor to answer or answering himself.[31] Although Plotinus' *Enneads* were not ostensibly written in dialogue form, they often imitate a dialogue, posing questions and offering alternative, hypothetical answers and their implications: for instance, Plotinus' treatise *Against the Gnostics* (II.9) contains many such examples and further examples can be found throughout the *Enneads*.[32] Porphyry also tells us that his teacher used the dialogic method in his lectures.[33] Indeed Porphyry relates his own extensive questioning of Plotinus on the nature of the soul:

> Τριῶν γοῦν ἡμερῶν ἐμοῦ Πορφυρίου ἐρωτήσαντος, πῶς ἡ ψυχὴ σύνεστι τῷ σώματι, παρέτεινεν ἀποδεικνύς, ὥστε καὶ Θαυμασίου τινὸς τοὔνομα ἐπεισελθόντος τοὺς καθόλου λόγους πράττοντος καὶ εἰς βιβλία ἀκοῦσαι αὐτοῦ λέγοντος θέλειν, Πορφυρίου δὲ ἀποκρινομένου καὶ ἐρωτῶντος μὴ ἀνασχέσθαι, ὁ δὲ ἔφη· "ἀλλὰ

[29] Lamberton (2001), 151.

[30] Plutarch's Delphic Dialogues: Chapter 1, p. 13, n. 55; p. 15, n. 68; n. 69. Other dialogues: *De Is.* and *De Genio Socratis.* Lamberton (2001), 146, argues that Plutarch's dialogues are the most important works in his corpus.

[31] Cf. Eunapius, *VS* 460; 406; Dillon (1973; repr. 2009), 16; (1987), 873; (2004), 408–409, discusses the role of 'public disputations' in Iamblichus' school, such as the visit and questions of the philosopher Alypius, recounted by Eunapius (*VS* 406). Cf. Iamblichus, *Letter 5: To Dexippus and Letter 13: To Sopater*, ed. Dillon and Polleichtner (2009), which praises the practice of dialectic (a practice which implies posing questions and answers using reason; Neoplatonist philosophers usually practised dialectic together, but the philosopher could equally well pose questions to him or herself and attempt to answer them); Dillon (2012), 56.

[32] Cf. for example, Plotinus, *Enn*. II.9.1.27–30; II.9.1.53–65; II.9.3.16–21; II.9.4; II.9.5.18–38; II.9.8.11–46; II.9.9.12–25; II.9.9.64–84; II.9.11; II.9.12; II.9.14.8–37; II.9.16.12–48. Cf. also III.4.3; III.4.4; III.4.5; III.4.6; III.8.3.1–18.

[33] Porphyry, *Plot.* 3.

ἂν μὴ Πορφυρίου ἐρωτῶντος λύσωμεν τὰς ἀπορίας, εἰπεῖν τι καθάπαξ εἰς τὸ βιβλίον οὐ δυνησόμεθα."

> Once I, Porphyry, went on asking him [i.e. Plotinus] for three days about the soul's connection with the body, and he kept on explaining to me. A man called Thaumasias came in who was interested in general statements and said that he wanted to hear Plotinus speaking in the manner of a set treatise, but could not stand Porphyry's questions and answers. Plotinus said, 'But if when Porphyry asks questions we do not solve his difficulties we shall not be able to say anything at all to put into the treatise.'[34]

Porphyry makes it clear that a central element in his own philosophical training was the dialogic method of inquiry. Furthermore, scholars have noted that this mode of intellectual inquiry is particularly characteristic of Porphyry and his philosophical approach: Porphyry's intellectual honesty, open-minded and questioning attitude towards knowledge, and his 'paratactic' style of thinking, where various interpretations are placed alongside others, typify his literary style, as does his fondness for citing extensively from other works.[35] Andrew Smith has already challenged the orthodox assessment of the *Letter to Anebo*: he argues persuasively that both Porphyry's approach and Iamblichus' comments show the *Letter* was not a frontal attack on pagan religious practice but a constructive inquiry formed from the perspective of an exploratory state of mind on Porphyry's part.[36] Meanwhile, Mark Edwards has argued that the *Letter to Anebo* may represent a class of schoolroom exercises, 'the thesis of which was avowedly questionable and demanded not so much assenting deference as a critical reply'.[37]

Following on from these observations, I would like to suggest that rather than being a scathing attack on pagan religious practice, Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* functions within the dialogue tradition of a constructive, philosophical inquiry. Although obviously not a dialogue itself, the *Letter to Anebo* could be viewed as a philosophical questioning from master to pupil, or from philosopher to philosopher. Porphyry ostensibly addresses his letter to Anebo, an Egyptian priest. Iamblichus calls this Anebo his student, although whether this character actually existed remains unclear.[38] However, it seems clear that the letter is aimed

[34] Porphyry, *Plot.* 13.

[35] Athanassiadi (1993), 117–118; Smith (2007), 12–13. Cf. Chapter 3, p. 93.

[36] Smith (1997), 29–31; (2007), 12–13.

[37] Edwards (1993a), 164.

[38] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.1 (2.5–7). The name receives no other mention except by Eusebius (quoting Porphyry's letter) and it is often assumed that it is fictitious: cf. Bidez (1913; repr. 1964), 81, n. 3; Sodano (1958), xxxvii. However, Proclus as reported in Psellus's *scholion* at the head of *De Mysteriis* implies that Anebo existed, for while the name Abammon is asserted as a pseudonym for Iamblichus, the *Letter* is noted simply as an address by Porphyry to Anebo.

either at Anebo (Iamblichus' student) or at Iamblichus himself.[39] As we have seen, Iamblichus may have been Porphyry's student, but at the very least the philosophers were certainly colleagues and fellow philosophers: Porphyry dedicated his work *On the Maxim "Know Thyself"* to Iamblichus.[40]

Viewed from this perspective, I would like to suggest that Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* may have been a *deliberate* attempt to establish a form of 'Platonic dialogue' on religious phenomena, either with Iamblichus himself (as a fellow philosopher) or with Iamblichus' student, Anebo. Porphyry knew the answers to his questions, but acts as a philosophical teacher to 'draw out' the philosophical explanations from his pupil or fellow-philosopher. From this perspective, both Porphyry as a philosopher and his work, the *Letter to Anebo*, are placed more firmly within the Platonic tradition of dialogic discourse; at the very least, this placement surely concurs more fully with Porphyry's self-identity. Porphyry, as other Neoplatonist philosophers, saw himself primarily as a Platonist philosopher. This perspective is surely more in line with Neoplatonic views of discourse and interaction than the current assessment of Porphyry as a vicious attacker and critic of Iamblichus' theurgic views. If we view Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* and Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* from the double perspective of a dialogic textual discourse stemming from the tradition of the Platonic dialogue, and as a work of the 'Problems and Solutions' genre, then the interaction between Porphyry and Iamblichus can be seen in a far more positive light, as a genuine philosophical exchange of ideas between 'master' and 'pupil', or between fellow philosophers. This view relocates both Porphyry and Iamblichus more firmly within the Platonic tradition of dialogic exchange and is therefore surely more in line with the self-identity of both philosophers.

Porphyry's Views of Religious Practices and Theurgy

Several points seem relevant here: firstly, Porphyry writes of religious phenomena in a very positive sense in the *Philosophy from Oracles*, *On Statues* (extant only in fragments), the *Letter to Marcella* and *De antro nympharum*.[41] Scholars used to explain the apparent disparities between the religious views expressed in the

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Cf. Clarke (2001), 7; 14, n. 25; Saffrey (1971), 231–233, notes that Iamblichus' school at Apamea included at least one Egyptian according to Eunapius (*VS* 473), and suggests that Anebo might have been a member of Iamblichus' circle. Cf. Clarke (2001), 7; (2003), xxix.

[39] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.1 (2.5–7).

[40] Cf. Chapter 1, p. 16, n. 78; n. 79.

[41] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac.*: Chapters 2 and 3; *De antr. nymph.*: Chapter 2; *De. Stat.*: Chapter 2; *Marc.* 18.14–16 (Des Places): 'The chief fruit of piety is to honour the divine according to the laws of our country' (Οὗτος γὰρ μέγιστος καρπὸς εὐσεβείας, τιμᾶν τὸ θεῖον κατὰ τὰ πάτρια); 19.4–7: 'Again you could not suppose my meaning to be this when I exhort you to reverence the gods, since it would be absurd to command this as though the matter admitted a question' (Οὐδὲ ταῦτα λέγειν με ἡγοῦ παραγγέλλοντα σέβειν θεόν·

Philosophy from Oracles and the *Letter to Anebo* by arguing that the former is a superstitious product of Porphyry's youth; while the *Letter to Anebo* is a much later and more 'rational' work written during or after his time with Plotinus and influenced by the latter's approach.[42] As discussed in Chapter 1, this evolutionary approach towards Porphyry's intellectual development has been discredited; rather, there is firm evidence that Porphyry used oracles in works written in his old age and that he held a continuous commitment towards traditional religion.[43] Furthermore, most recent scholars have argued that the *Philosophy from Oracles* was a mature and sophisticated work.[44] Moreover, in Chapter 1 we saw that several episodes in the *Life of Plotinus* indicate that, for Porphyry, philosophy, poetry and religious ritual were complementary and intrinsically linked ways to truth.[45]

Secondly, it was Porphyry who formally introduced theurgy into Neoplatonism, even if in a more limited manner than Iamblichus: he wrote a commentary (now lost) on the *Chaldean Oracles* and seems to have been the first Neoplatonist to use them.[46] Porphyry's attitude towards theurgy is complex but it is important to note that he attributed at least some value to theurgy.

Thirdly, one of the key elements of the exchange between Porphyry and Iamblichus revolves around conceptions of the gods and models of ritual efficacy: Iamblichus strongly maintains that human terminology and modes of behaviour cannot be appropriately applied to the gods (since the latter are immutable and eternal) as part of his defence of theurgy as involving assimilation to, rather than compulsion of, the gods. Porphyry's questions in the *Letter to Anebo*, some of which ask about this very issue, are frequently taken to be representative of his own 'sceptical' views on theurgy, particularly as decisive indications of his attitude towards prayer as ineffective and impious attempts at coercion of the divine. Yet, in *De abstinentia* and the *Letter to Marcella*, Porphyry insists on the immutability of the divine along Platonic lines and argues against dishonouring the gods with false human opinions (such as the notion that the gods get angry, refuted with reference to the immutability of the divine), exhibiting a similar attitude towards divine immutability as that of Iamblichus and suggesting that he would not have endorsed a coercive view of prayer.[47] In his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, Proclus also discusses Porphyry's favourable attitude towards prayer, including the latter's doxographical account of two forms of atheism and the alternative view: that the

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γελεοῖος γὰρ ὁ τοῦτο παραγγέλλων ὡς ἐπιδιστάζειν ἐνόντος περὶ τούτου). Cf. also Chapter 1, p. 24, n. 125.

[42] Cf. Chapter 1, p. 21, n. 110; n. 112.

[43] Cf. Chapter 1, p. 23, n. 119; n. 123; Chapter 2, pp. 75–77; Porphyry, *Plot.* 22.

[44] Cf. Chapter 1, p. 24, n. 124; Chapter 3, p. 84 and n. 3; pp. 89–91.

[45] Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 15–16; 23.

[46] Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 9–10, n. 37.

[47] Porphyry, *Abst*. 2.41.1–2 (cited in Chapter 3, p. 111); *Marc.* 11.5–6; 18.20–25; 17.5–14. Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 111–112.

gods exist and exercise providence, which consequently entails an acceptance of the efficacy of prayer.[48] Proclus states that Porphyry adds a number of arguments in favour of prayer, suggesting that the alternative to atheism, based on divine providence, is endorsed by Porphyry. The Porphyrian arguments adduced in favour of prayer imply a positive attitude towards the efficacy of prayer on the philosopher's part, which is difficult to reconcile with the sceptical nature of the questions on prayer and invocation in the *Letter to Anebo* unless the latter work indeed reports the views of others or common conceptions of prayer, as is implied by the nature of the broad spectrum of questions contained in the *Letter*.

A Spectrum of Questions

The sheer variety of questions addressed by Porphyry in the *Letter* is noted by Iamblichus himself in his programmatic statements in the beginning of *De Mysteriis*:

> Τὰ μὲν οὖν ἐπιποθεῖ διάκρισίν τινα τῶν κακῶς συγκεχυμένων, τὰ δ' ἐστὶ περὶ τὴν αἰτίαν δι' ἣν ἕκαστά ἐστί τε οὑτωσὶ καὶ νοεῖται, τὰ δ' ἐπ' ἄμφω τὴν γνώμην ἕλκει κατ' ἐναντίωσίν τινα προβαλλόμενα· ἔνια δὲ καὶ τὴν ὅλην ἀπαιτεῖ παρ' ἡμῶν μυσταγωγίαν· τοιαῦτα δὲ ὄντα πολλαχόθεν εἴληπται καὶ ἀπὸ διαφερουσῶν ἐπιστημῶν.
>
> Some questions, then, call for the clarification of issues which have been wrongly confused, while others concern the reason why various things are the way they are, and are thought of in such a way; others, again, draw one's attention in both directions at once, since they contain an inherent contradiction; and still others call for an exposition of our whole mystical system. *This being the case, they are taken from many perspectives, and from very various branches of knowledge* [my emphasis].[49]

The diverse questions contained in the *Letter to Anebo*, drawing on a broad spectrum of perspectives, add to the possibility that Porphyry was deliberately posing a range of questions in order to obtain a full exposition of religious phenomena and theurgy. It also seems relevant here that Iamblichus fails to maintain the second person when he speaks of his interlocutor, sometimes stating

[48] Proclus, *In Tim*. 2.207.24–208.30.
[49] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.1 (4.5–9).

objections or questions in the third person.[50] Iamblichus elaborates further on the wide-ranging scope of Porphyry's questions:

> Τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἀφ' ὧν οἱ Χαλδαίων σοφοὶ παραδεδώκασι τὰς ἐπιστάσεις προσάγει· τὰ δ' ἀφ' ὧν Αἰγυπτίων οἱ προφῆται διδάσκουσι ποιεῖται τὰς ἀντιλήψεις, ἔνια δὲ καὶ τῆς τῶν φιλοσόφων θεωρίας ἐχόμενα τὰς ἐρωτήσεις ἑπομένως αὐτοῖς ποιεῖται. Ἤδη δέ τινα καὶ ἀπ' ἄλλων οὐκ ἀξίων λόγου δοξασμάτων ἐφέλκεταί τινα ἀπρεπῆ διαμφισβήτησιν, τὰ δ' ἀπὸ τῶν κοινῶν ὑπολήψεων παρ' ἀνθρώποις ὥρμηται·
>
> Some, in fact, require us to address them on the basis of the traditions of the sages of Chaldaea; others will derive their solution from the teachings of the prophets of Egypt; and others again, which relate to the speculations of the philosophers, need to be answered on that basis. There are also some that, deriving from other opinions not worthy of note, involve one in unseemly controversy, while others are drawn from the common conceptions of men.[51]

Iamblichus detects at least three different general sources for the questions posed by Porphyry in the *Letter to Anebo*: the 'speculations of the philosophers' (τῆς τῶν φιλοσόφων θεωρίας), some questions related to the 'common conceptions of men' (τῶν κοινῶν ὑπολήφεων παρ' ἀνθρώποις) and some which derive from 'opinions not worthy of note' (ἄλλων οὐκ ἀξίων λόγου δοξασμάτων).[52] Moreover, when Iamblichus discusses a section of the *Letter* distinguishing gods and *daimones* according to their corporeality or incorporeality, he states: 'But perhaps one should not examine this distinction too closely; for you are not proposing it as your own view, *but are stating it as the opinion of others*' [my emphasis] (Ἀλλ' ἴσως οὐ δεῖ πάνυ τι βασανίζειν τὴν ἀντιδιαστολὴν ταύτην· οὐδὲ γὰρ ὡς σαυτοῦ γνώμην ταύτην προτείνεις, ἀλλ' ὡς ἑτέρων αὐτὴν δόξαν ἀποφαίνῃ).[53]

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[50] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.12 (40.12); 1.15 (48.11); 3.2 (102.12); 3.25 (158.3–4); 3.30 (173.7); Edwards (1993a), 164.

[51] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.1 (4.10–5.3).

[52] Cf. also Iamblichus, *DM* 1.2 (5.12–6.5), for an almost identical classification of the sources of the questions: presumably 'alien sources' (τὰ ἀλλόφυλα) are to be identified with these 'opinions not worthy of note' (ἄλλων οὐκ ἀξίων λόγου δοξασμάτων).

[53] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.16 (50.8–10). Critics may see evidence against viewing the exchange as a dialogue in this quotation, given that Iamblichus mentions Porphyry's viewpoint; yet this point need not conflict with a deliberately constructed dialogue, whereby even Porphyry's *persona* as an argumentative Greek might be set in high relief, as is often the case with interlocutors in Plato's dialogues. See the section below entitled: *The Innovative Greeks and the Sacred Constancy of the Barbarians.*

The fact that a wide variety of questions based on a range of perspectives is posed by Porphyry is evident, for example, in the range of issues posed about divination. At the end of Book 3, Iamblichus makes it clear that Porphyry had asked whether divination is caused by deceptive *daimones*:

> Ἔτι τοίνυν καὶ ταύτης ἐστὶ φαυλοτέρα τῶν ἱεροπρεπῶν δρωμένων ἐξήγησις ἡ γένος τι ἀπατηλῆς φύσεως παντόμορφόν τε καὶ πολύτροπον αἰτιωμένη τῆς μαντείας ὑποκρινόμενον θεοὺς καὶ δαίμονας καὶ ψυχὰς τῶν τεθνηκότων ... Μάτην οὖν ἐπεισάγεις τὴν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀθέων δόξαν, ὡς ἄρα τὴν πᾶσαν μαντείαν ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ δαίμονος ἡγοῦνται ἐπιτελεῖσθαι· οὔτε γὰρ ἄξιον αὐτῶν μνημονεύειν ἐν ταῖς περὶ θεῶν ἐπιστάσεσι, καὶ ἅμα ἀμαθεῖς εἰσιν οὗτοι τῆς τοῦ ἀληθοῦς τε καὶ ψευδοῦς διακρίσεως διὰ τὸ ἐν σκότῳ τὴν ἀρχὴν τεθράφθαι, τάς τε ἀρχάς, ἀφ' ὧν παραγίγνονται ταῦτα, οὐδέποτε δύνανται διαγιγνώσκειν.
>
> Moreover, there is an interpretation of the sacred operations even worse than this, attributing the cause of divination to 'a certain kind of deceptive nature, both protean and versatile, which takes on the forms of gods, daemons, and ghosts of the dead' ... In vain, then, do you introduce the opinion of the atheists that 'all divination is accomplished by the evil daemon.' For such people do not deserve to be mentioned in discussions about the gods, and they are at the same time both ignorant of the distinction between truth and falsity, having been nurtured in the dark from the beginning, and not able to discern the principles from which these things come into being.[54]

This question raised by Porphyry corresponds to Christian criticism of pagan religious phenomena: early Christian writers, such as Eusebius, deliberately conflated the pagan gods with evil *daimones* and argued that oracles and other forms of divination were not given by the gods, but by evil *daimones*.[55] This accusation had become commonplace by Porphyry's time. Indeed, Iamblichus recognises the Christian nature of this question; while he never mentions the Christians by name, he refers to 'atheists', a common pagan designation for the Christians in Late Antiquity.[56] Late Antique pagans often referred to the Christians as 'atheists' (ἄθεοι), because of their refusal to worship the traditional, ancestral gods and

[54] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.31 (175.12–176.1; 179.9–180.3).

[55] See Chapter 3, pp. 106–109.

[56] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.31 (179.9); Clarke (2001), 73, 88 n. 23 and 24; (2003), xxviii, 201, n. 246; Edwards (1993a), 168–169. It is likely that this question is one of those which Iamblichus refers to in the opening of the *De Mysteriis* as 'opinions not worthy of note' and derived from 'alien sources', which reinforces the possibility that the latter are oblique references to the Christians: cf. *DM* 1.1 (4.10–5.3); 1.2 (5.12–6.5).

because of their refusal to acknowledge the divinity of the Roman emperor. It is well known that Porphyry was deeply opposed to Christianity; he wrote a work entitled *Against the Christians*, and was considered by Christian authors to be a formidable enemy of Christianity.[57] The idea that he could genuinely believe that divination was caused in such a way, in accordance with a view common in Late Antique Christian polemic, makes little sense. Rather, the presence of such questions in the *Letter to Anebo* lends support to the notion that Porphyry asked a wide range of questions, many of which he would not have personally endorsed, in order to gain a comprehensive account of pagan religious phenomena for educational and protreptic purposes. Additionally, it is relevant that Porphyry argues in his work *De abstinentia* that it is good *daimones* who bring oracles to men from the gods.[58]

Further questions and lines of inquiry in Porphyry's *Letter* can be shown to derive from earlier philosophical views. For example, three lines of enquiry or possible explanations posed by Porphyry regarding the operation of oracles are partly based on Plutarch's *Delphic dialogues*: Porphyry first suggests that oracles operate by the gods being drawn down through the necessity of invocations.[59] Secondly, he postulates the explanation that the soul speaks and imagines these things: the oracles are conditions of the soul which have been produced by small sparks (μικρὰ αἰθύγματα).[60] Thirdly, Porphyry posits that oracles are caused by a mixed form of substance from our soul and from an exterior divine inspiration.[61] These explanations are partly based on Plutarch's *The Oracles at Delphi*, where it is suggested (1) that one must not believe that the god himself composed the verses of the oracles or suggests the oracles to the prophetess as if he were prompting an actor to speak his words (possibly indicating that the god literally speaks out of necessity, being compelled by the oracular ritual) and (2) that the god uses the soul and body of the priestess and so the oracle comes from a mixture of divine inspiration and the soul itself, which contaminates the divine inspiration.[62] This brief analysis of some of Porphyry's questions about divination demonstrates that they do not all necessarily represent Porphyry's own views but are derived from the views of others and represent a broad variety of perspectives, as Iamblichus himself maintains. Moreover, we have seen that Porphyry's favourable attitude towards prayer evident in the *Letter to Marcella* and Proclus' *Commentary on the Timaeus*

[57] See Chapter 3, pp. 84–88.

[58] Porphyry, *Abst.* 2.38.3, drawing on Plato, *Symp.* 202e. Porphyry admits in this work that evil *daimones* do exist, yet he explicitly attributes the bringing of oracles to good *daimones*. Cf. Chapter 3, p. 108, n. 122.

[59] Porphyry, *Letter* in Iamblichus, *DM* 3.18 (145.3–6).

[60] Porphyry, *Letter* in Iamblichus, *DM* 3.20 (147.12–148.3); 3.21 (151.1–3).

[61] Porphyry, *Letter* in Iamblichus, *DM* 3.21 (150.3–5; 151.3–7).

[62] Plutarch, *De Pyth. or.* 20–21 (404a9–b6; 404b11–c7); 6 (397c1–9); Smith (2007), 13, n. 18.

also suggests that the questions concerning the possibly coercive nature of prayer and invocation in the *Letter to Anebo* do not represent the philosopher's own views but are derived from the conceptions of others.[63]

'The sanction of the harmonious friendship between us'

It is surely significant that Iamblichus closes the *De Mysteriis* with the following words to Porphyry:

> Τοσαῦτά σοι καθ' ἡμετέραν δύναμιν ἀπεκρινάμεθα περὶ ὧν ἠπόρησας περὶ τῆς θείας μαντικῆς τε καὶ θεουργίας. Εὔχομαι δὴ οὖν τὸ λοιπὸν τοῖς θεοῖς ἐπὶ τῷ τέλει τῶν λόγων, τῶν ἀληθῶν νοημάτων ἐμοί τε καὶ σοὶ παρέχειν τὴν φυλακὴν ἀμετάπτωτον, εἴς τε τὸν ἀίδιον αἰῶνα τῶν αἰωνίων ἀλήθειαν ἐντιθέναι, καὶ τελειοτέρων νοήσεων περὶ θεῶν χορηγεῖν μετουσίαν, ἐν αἷς δὴ καὶ τὸ μακαριστὸν τέλος τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἡμῖν πρόκειται καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ κῦρος τῆς ὁμονοητικῆς φιλίας τῆς πρὸς ἀλλήλους.
>
> Thus, to the best of our ability, have we responded to the problems you have raised about divine prophecy and theurgy. It remains, therefore, at the end of this discourse, for me to pray to the gods to grant both to me and to you the unalterable preservation of true thoughts, to implant in us the truth of eternal things forever, and to grant to us a participation in the more perfect conceptions of the gods in which the most blessed end of good things is placed before us, *along with the sanction of the harmonious friendship between us* [my emphasis].[64]

Scholars who see the exchange between Porphyry and Iamblichus as a hostile debate tend to ignore this significant passage, although Emma Clarke does refer to it as a final 'put-down' of Porphyry, combined with something of an olive branch.[65] Yet friendship (φιλία) held a place of central importance in Iamblichus' philosophy, as evidenced by the letters which he wrote to his philosophical followers and friends.[66] Elsewhere, I have shown that the care for humanity or 'sympathy for one's fellow human beings' (φίλανθρωπία) and providential care ideally exhibited by the philosopher towards his fellow human beings was seen by Iamblichus and his circle at Apamea as a manifestation of divine providence

[63] See pp. 137–138 and n. 47 above.

[64] Iamblichus, *DM* 10.8 (293.11–294.4).

[65] Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell (2003), 353, n. 497.

[66] Cf. Iamblichus, *Letters*. Recipients include Sopater, Dexippus and Eustathius, as well as the unidentified correspondents Arete (the only female correspondent in the extant fragments), Agrippa, Macedonius, Asphalius, Poemenius and Anatolius. Cf. Dillon and Polleichtner (2009), xvii–xix; Dillon (2012), 51–62.

and divine love, spontaneously expressed in religious, political, personal and all other spheres of human life and activity.[67] Furthermore, Iamblichus' endorsement of cultic worship, philosophical advice and wisdom on a popular level for all of humanity embody some of the central purposes and values of the theurgist: to co-create with the Demiurge and to bring divine wisdom to all souls and to the entire cosmos, so far as this is possible.[68] Moreover, in Iamblichus' philosophy, the different levels of gods and souls comprise a community based on sympathy and friendship, linked by correspondence and assimilation, which are possible because of divine love.[69] In all of this, Iamblichus was profoundly influenced by the Pythagorean tradition which was apparently based on 'friendship of all with all' (φίλίας δὲ πάντων πρὸς ἅπαντας).[70] The importance of friendship and community at the core of Iamblichean philosophy and theurgy suggests that Iamblichus' closing words to Porphyry in the *De Mysteriis* were written in a genuine spirit of friendship and philosophical fellowship. This adds further support to the idea that the *Letter* and the *De Mysteriis* form a dialogue with protreptic and educational functions, composed in the spirit of friendship and philosophical inquiry.

The Innovative Greeks and the Sacred Constancy of the Barbarians

An important *topos* of the *De Mysteriis* involves a contrast between the restless innovation of the Greeks and the eternal nature of the Egyptians and other 'barbarian' races. Gregory Shaw has argued that Iamblichus criticises the innovation of the Greeks in contrast to the eternal constancy of the Egyptians, suggesting that Porphyry is made to represent the 'merely clever' man and Iamblichus the inspired mantic of Plato's *Phaedrus* 245c1–2.[71] Gillian Clark has observed that Iamblichus deliberately casts Porphyry in the role of an argumentative Greek intellectual in contrast both to his assumed Egyptian persona and to his actual Syrian descent.[72] The situation is complicated by the fact that Porphyry himself came from Tyre in the Near East although, as

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[67] Addey (2011b), 322; (2012), 133–148. Iamblichus' insistence on the necessity of cultic and ritual worship for all people at *DM* 5.15 (219.10–220.7) and 5.18 (223.8–225.1) can be viewed as an expression of all-encompassing concern for humanity at large, seen as an expression of the providential care of the gods and a communication of the absolute Good.

[68] Iamblichus' endorsement of cultic worship for all humanity: *DM* 5.1 (199.5–10); 5.10 (211.5–10); 5.15 (219.10–220.7); 5.18 (223.8–225.9); 5.26 (240.9–14); *VP* 9.45–50; 10.51–53; 11.54–57; Addey (2011b), 322; O'Meara (2003), 128.

[69] Iamblichus, *DM* 5.9 (209.9–210.10); 5.10 (209.11–211.14); 5.14 (217.4–218.13); 5.15 (219.1–220.14); *VP* 10.53; 16.69–70; 33.229–240; Dillon and Hershbell (1991), 2; O'Meara (2003), 128.

[70] Iamblichus, *VP* 16.69–70; 33.229–240.

[71] Shaw (1995), 2–3; 7–8; 232; (2007b), 71.

[72] Clark (1999), 125. Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 7.5 (257.8–14; 259.4–260.2).

Clark claims, he identifies himself as Greek, culturally, rather than as Syrian or Phoenician.[73] Iamblichus' criticisms of the innovation of the Greeks are evident in his discussion of the 'unknowable' barbarian names and seem to follow Plato's comments that the Greeks were restless and innovative.[74] However, the discussion itself suggests that the criticisms should be taken specifically within the context of the 'unknowable' names and ritual formulae, since the injunction not to alter or change the barbarian names was common in Late Antique mystical literature and was related to their status as ritualistic divine language.[75]

Moreover, Porphyry himself, in a commentary on an oracle of Apollo which praises 'barbarian' wisdom in his *Philosophy from Oracles*, criticises the Greeks in comparison with the wisdom of Egyptians, Phoenicians, Chaldeans, Lydians and Hebrews.[76] Porphyry also praises the disciplined way of life of the Egyptians, the Hebrews, the Persians and the Indians in his *De abstinentia*, using the priests of these nations as paradigmatic examples of those who assimilate themselves to the divine through their way of life.[77]

Even taking into account the observation that Iamblichus has deliberately cast himself as the wise Egyptian/Syrian sage in opposition to Porphyry, 'the Greek intellectual', their exchange can still be viewed as a Platonic dialogue in which the chief interlocutors have deliberately taken on specific roles and characteristics in high relief in order to highlight particular aspects of the religious debates in which they are engaged. The adoption of specific roles may well strengthen the claim that these texts should be read within the dialogue tradition since there is a strong current of theatricality and the adoption of *personae* in dialogues. If Iamblichus occasionally seems sharp in some of his answers to Porphyry in *De Mysteriis*, it could be because his character, the Egyptian priest 'Abammon', wishes to clarify the points he is making as emphatically as possible, just as characters within the Platonic dialogues are often given a very specific tone and particular characteristics in order to set in high relief specific aspects of the debate.[78] For example, Shaw

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[73] Clark (1999), 118; 121.

[74] Iamblichus, *DM* 7.5 (259.4–14). Cf. Plato, *Leg.* 657a; Clark (1999), 123.

[75] *Chald. Or.* F150; *Corp. herm*. 16.2; *PGM* IV.3172; VII.703–726; XII.121–143; 190–192; Origen, *Contra Celsum.* 1.6; 1.24–25; 4.33–34; 5.45; Proclus, *In. Parm*. 851.8; *Plat. Theol.*1.44. Cf. Clarke (2003), 303, n. 393; Addey (2011a), 279–294, especially 286, n. 31; Edwards (2004), 223.

[76] Porphyry, *Phil. Orac*. F324, lines 4–11 = Eusebius, *PE* 9.10.3–5, cited in Chapter 2, p. 48 and n. 19.

[77] Porphyry, *Abst.* 4.6–4.10; 4.11–4.14; 4.16; 4.17–4.18. Cf. also Numenius F1a; Clark (2000a), 181–182, n. 570.

[78] The use of character in Plato's dialogues: Blondell (2002). Examples adduced by scholars of a sharp tone on Iamblichus' part towards Porphyry: *DM* 1.5 (15.3–4); 1.8 (26.12–14); 1.18 (52.13–53.2); 3.1 (99.9–100.1; 100.8–11); 3.24 (156.3–5); 4.11 (195.1); 5.1 (199.6–8); 6.1 (241.4–6). Cf. Clarke (2001), 7; Shaw (2012), 91, n. 3.

points to *De Mysteriiis* 1.16 (49.11–13) as a key example of Iamblichus' derisive tone, which states that Porphyry's assumptions about gods and *daimones* are 'so far removed from indicating the proper features of their essences that one is unable even to conjecture anything about them' (τοσοῦτον ἀπέχουσα τοῦ τὰ ἰδιώματα αὐτῶν τῆς οὐσίας φράζειν ὥστε μηδ' εἰκάσαι εἶναι περὶ αὐτῶν).[79] Iamblichus is clearly emphasising the inappropriateness of attempting to categorise gods and *daimones* according to their corporeality and incorporeality, putting his views in the strongest possible terms in order to set in high relief the misguided basis of such an approach. Yet significiantly, Iamblichus concludes this specific discussion by explicitly saying that Porphyry is not stating this question as his own view but proposing it as the opinion of others.[80]

Some Literary Parallels: Philo's De aeternitate mundi *as a Dialogue*

It may be instructive to examine some literary parallels relating to uses of dialogue and disputation in Antiquity. In an erudite analysis, David Runia has suggested that Philo's treatise *De aeternitate mundi* (*On the Eternity of the World*) does not express Philo's own position but is written as an example of the θέσις genre (which uses *pro* and *contra* arguments) in order to provoke an answer (perhaps from Philo himself).[81] Runia's exposition of Philo's literary style and methodology in relation to this issue bears some significant similarities to prominent features of Porphyry's methodology and literary style, while his overall argument is relevant to the view presented here of Porphyry's *Letter* and Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* as a dialogue. Any interpretation of Philo's treatise has to deal with two sets of problems: firstly, the formal and structural features of the treatise, for the work comprises a patchwork of philosophical arguments, doxographical accounts, polemics and rhetorical passages. After his introduction, Philo presents a long sequence of arguments evidently derived from source material but his precise relation to these arguments is unclear.[82] There is an evident parallel with Porphyry's *Letter*, which asks a wide variety of questions drawn from a broad range of perspectives. Furthermore, there is a broader parallel with Porphyry's literary style and methodology more generally, for Porphyry often cites extensively from the works of other authors – this kind of learned compilation has been described by Andrew Smith as a 'paratactic' style of thinking where Porphyry places a number of interpretations after each other and leaves the reader to make his own choice.[83]

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79 Shaw (2012), 91, n. 3.
80 Iamblichus, *DM* 1.16 (50.8–10) (cited above p. 139 and n. 53).
81 Runia (1981), 105–151.
82 Runia (1981), 105–106.
83 Smith (2007), 12–13.

The second interpretative problem raised by Runia relates to the philosophical nature of Philo's treatise: the topic of whether the cosmos is destructible or indestructible raises cosmological and theological issues in which Philo was deeply interested. Yet the arguments presented in the treatise postulate a viewpoint inconsistent with the views recorded elsewhere in Philo's arguments, since the treatise claims that the cosmos is indestructible and uncreated. The second half of this proposition directly contradicts Philo's firm conviction that God has created the cosmos.[84] In relation to these problems, Cumont proposed that the *De aeternitate mundi* is a youthful work, a *Jugendschrift*.[85] As Runia has observed, this potential solution presupposes a genetic or developmental approach to the thought and writings of Philo, which has frequently been accompanied by speculative psychological observations; yet such an approach has failed on account of a total lack of evidence.[86] There is a clear parallel with the developmental approach applied to Porphyry's thought and writings, which explains apparent inconsistencies in views expressed on religious traditions between works such as the *Philosophy from Oracles* and the *Letter to Anebo* by positing an evolutionary development in Porphyry's thought from a youthful, 'superstitious' phase to a more 'rational' approach influenced by Plotinus, yet (as with Philo) there is little evidence for this evolutionary approach.[87]

Through an extensive analysis of the structural features and content of Philo's treatise, Runia demonstrates convincingly that Philo's treatise has as its formal basis the genre of the θέσις, the treatment of a general philosophical proposition by means of *pro* and *contra* arguments, as practised in the rhetorical and philosophical schools of the day.[88] Runia's argument dissolves the apparent inconsistencies between the arguments expressed in this treatise and Philo's other works, better accounts for the parallels between this treatise and Philo's philosophical treatises (known to be mature works), and, in a broader sense, demonstrates that a consideration of the structural features and literary genre of ancient philosophical and theological works is vital in any interpretation proposed for them.[89] I would suggest that this last point is particularly crucial for any attempt to interpret Porphyry's *Letter* and Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*. Furthermore, while I have suggested that these works operate within the genre of philosophical dialogue (rather than within the θέσις genre, which argues for and against one philosophical proposition in particular), there is a strong parallel between Runia's approach towards Philo's treatise and that advocated here, both of which examine

[84] Runia (1981), 106–107.

[85] Cumont (1891), xxii–xxiv; Runia (1981), 108.

[86] Cf. Runia (1981), 109; 142, n. 24, for a summary of the scholarship adhering to this developmental approach and the psychological observations often made alongside it.

[87] Cf. pp. 136–137, n. 42 and n. 43 above; Chapter 1, pp. 21–24.

[88] Runia (1981), 118; 131; 112–141.

[89] Runia (1981), 139–141.

ancient philosophical works in relation to the intellectual and cultural contexts of ancient philosophical interaction, discourse and education.

The Descent of the Soul and Theurgy

It is important to examine a philosophical and psychological theory which may have possible implications for the ways in which we view the interaction between Porphyry and Iamblichus in the *Letter* and the *De Mysteriis*. Scholars generally hold that Plotinus and Porphyry thought that part of the soul is 'undescended' and remains in Intellect, while Iamblichus considered that the soul completely descends from Intellect.[90] Gregory Shaw sees this issue as providing the psychological and cosmological basis for Iamblichus' endorsement of theurgy as the only means of salvation: because the soul descends completely into the material world, it is necessary to use material ritual to re-establish contact with the gods.[91] Plotinus' and Porphyry's views on theurgy in relation to those of Iamblichus and the later Neoplatonists will be examined in more depth in Chapter 5. However, given that this philosophical issue could be seen as an objection to the view of the interaction between Porphyry and Iamblichus presented here, it seems important to examine this issue.

Iamblichus and Plotinus on the Descent of the Soul and Implications for views of Ritual

In *De Anima* 6, Iamblichus states that Numenius, Plotinus and Amelius placed the intelligible world, and gods and *daimones* and the Good and all the beings superior to the soul within the individual soul – according to this doctrine, the soul does not differ from Intellect and the gods, although Iamblichus includes the qualification that this holds at least in respect to its substance in general.[92] To this view, Iamblichus seems to oppose his own view (although he offers it anonymously) that the soul comes about as following upon Intellect (rather than being of an identical substance to it), and represents a distinct level of being.[93] This passage seems to be corroborated by a fragment of Iamblichus' *Commentary on the Timaeus*, where it is stated that the soul is a separate and inferior hypostasis to Intellect and to the 'greater kinds' (i.e. the gods, angels, *daimones* and heroes)

[90] Lloyd (1967), 287–293; Wallis (1972; repr. 1995), 118–120; Steel (1978), 24–29; 34–69; Finamore (1985), 4–5; 21–23; (1997), 163–176; Shaw (1995), 10–14; Remes (2007), 124; 57–58; Digeser (2009), 81.

[91] Shaw (1993), 116; (1995), 10–14; 64–117; (1997), 177–190; (1998), 230–231. Cf. also Finamore (1999), 83–85; Digeser (2009), 81.

[92] Iamblichus, *De An.* 6.2–10 (365); 7.14–18 (365–366). Cf. Finamore (1997), 164–165.

[93] Iamblichus, *De An.* 7.14–18 (365–366).

generally, and no part of the soul remains always without passions (ἀπαθές) and always in Intellect (ἀεὶ νοεῖ); Iamblichus presents the latter part of this view as being opposed to that of Plotinus (and Theodorus), 'who want to preserve in us an element that is impassible and always enjoying intellection' (...ἀπαθές τι φυλάττοντας ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ ἀεὶ νοοῦν).[94] Certain passages from Plotinus' *Enneads* seem to support Iamblichus' assertions of his philosophical position on this issue.[95]

It seems that Plotinus and Iamblichus did disagree regarding the nature of the human soul and its relationship with Intellect, at least to a certain extent. Yet certain evidence may suggest that this represents a difference of emphasis rather than a fundamental doctrinal difference between the philosophers. Firstly, Iamblichus states that only Numenius holds this position unequivocally while Plotinus does not hold this position consistently (οὐ πάντῃ δὲ ὁμολογουμένως Πλωτῖνος).[96] Iamblichus' caveat surely softens the extent to which he perceives Plotinus as holding the view of the soul as undescended and remaining in Intellect (*Nous*) in a firm sense, introducing a certain ambiguity and equivocation into Plotinus' philosophical position. This qualification points towards a technical problem and suggests that Iamblichus saw an imprecision in Plotinus' formulations, in which the latter did not succeed in maintaining the difference between Intellect and Soul that he clearly believed to be the case.[97] In relation to this, some scholars have argued that Iamblichus' differences with Plotinus on the spiritual capacities of the soul were more semantic than substantive and that Iamblichus translated the metaphysics and psychology of Plotinus into the terminology of Chaldean theurgy.[98]

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[94] Iamblichus, *In Tim.* F87, ed. Dillon (1973; repr. 2009). Cf. Dillon (1973; repr. 2009), 382–383; Finamore (1985), 149. Van den Berg (1997), 149–162, has questioned whether F87 (drawn from Proclus' *Timaeus* commentary) can be used as evidence for Iamblichus' views because (1) the fragment states that the highest part of the soul is the charioteer but Iamblichus elsewhere (*In Phaedr*. F5b, lines 9–10) claims that the highest part is the helmsman which was for him the 'One of the Soul'; and (2) Iamblichus held that some souls are unaffected by the descent and never break their connection with the higher realm, which implies that they never stop exercising intellection (*In Phaed*. F6; *De An*. 30.1–9). Finamore (1997), 164, n. 4; 173–176, offers a convincing refutation of these arguments, claiming that Iamblichus does not hold that pure souls do not intellectualise always but only intermittently with the gods' help. However, this debate reinforces the need for caution regarding this complex issue, which is less clear-cut than many have maintained.

[95] Plotinus, *Enn.* III.8.5.10–17; IV.8.8.1–6; IV.2.12; IV.3.12.1–6.

[96] Iamblichus, *De An.* 6.9 (365). Cf. Dillon (1973; repr. 2009), 382.

[97] I owe this suggestion to Tim Riggs (private mail communication 11 October 2012).

[98] Smith (1974), 86–89; Zintzen (1983), 319. Cf. also Steel (1978), 30–31; 33; 45; Bussanich (2005), 488–490.

Futhermore, although Plotinus subscribes to the idea that part of the soul is undescended and remains in *Nous*, this may not necessarily have the ramifications for his view of ritual that have been suggested by scholars. Firstly, the cosmological 'dualism' and desacralisation of the cosmos which Shaw sees in Plotinus' position on the undescended soul is incorrect or at least overemphasised. Following Jonathan Z. Smith's taxonomy, Shaw attributes a utopian view of the cosmos to Plotinus, rather than a locative worldview: in the former, one does not aspire to assimilate the personal microcosmos to the macrocosmos because the macrocosmos is something one seeks to escape because there is no place in the cosmos that is good.[99] Shaw claims that Plotinus was in the utopian camp because he denied the soul's descent in the realm of matter and identified sensible matter as evil and the cause of the soul's confusion:

> Whereas traditional Platonic *paideia* had traced an ascent to the gods through a deepening assimilation to cosmic orders, Plotinus' utopian orientation tended to devalue the cosmos as a divine revelation; this in turn, denied the value of religious rituals tied to the rhythms of the sensible world ... The doctrine of an undescended soul also had significant social consequences. If the traditional agricultural and civic religious festivals were tied to nature's powers, to take part in them would commit oneself to the daimonic order. The philosopher of the Plotinian school, therefore, should refuse to acknowledge daimonic gods or participate in civic religious rites and all corresponding social customs. To paraphrase the words of Plotinus, it is for the gods to come to the philosopher, not for him to go to them.[100]

Yet a close examination of relevant Plotinian treatises suggests that he adhered to a locative rather than utopian view of the cosmos. For example, in *Ennead* V.1 [10] 2, Plotinus encourages soul (which implies the reader) to realise that it has made all living things by breathing life in them, not just animals and fishes, but even the divine stars, the sun, the great heaven. This chapter presents a cosmological picture completely compatible with the locative view, because Plotinus presents the whole universe as permeated by divinity.[101] Several passages of the *Enneads* point inescapably to the conclusion that 'Plotinus clearly sees the divine permeating the universal order of things and he encourages us to contemplate the universal order of things and to assimilate ourselves to it', as Van den Berg notes.[102] In his treatise *Against the Gnostics*, Plotinus condemns those who set themselves next to

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[99] For a summary of the locative view of the cosmos, see Chapter 1, pp. 28–29.

[100] Shaw (1995), 11–12, who cites Porphyry's *Plot.* 10 to support his point that the Plotinian philosopher should not participate in civic religious rites. Yet earlier in the same chapter Porphyry reports the anecdote about the evocation of Plotinus' guardian *daimon* at the Iseum of Rome, which Plotinus attended 'eagerly' (ἑτοίμως). Cf. Chapter 1, p. 16.

[101] Plotinus, *Enn*. V.1[10].2; Van den Berg (1999), 352–354.

[102] Plotinus, *Enn*. V.1[10] 4.1–12; Van den Berg (1999), 354.

the supreme god by denying the existence of the visible and intelligible gods and thus reject 'the beings they venerate according to the tradition received from their fathers'; he exhorts all humans to praise all the orders of the gods.[103] It has also been noted that Plotinus uses images from popular religion in the *Enneads* to illustrate his teachings without a semblance of antipathy.[104] Van den Berg argues that to invoke the gods to come ('They need to come to me, not I to them', in response to Amelius' invitation to visit the temples at the New Moon festival), as Plotinus did, conforms to common practice in Greek religion, although the confusion of Porphyry and other pupils may suggest that this comment was somewhat unorthodox.[105] These issues will be further examined in the following chapter, but this evidence raises enough doubts regarding Plotinus' apparent cosmological dualism and dismissal of traditional religion and ritual to conclude that his theory that part of the soul remains undescended in Intellect does not necessarily entail a corresponding rejection of traditional religion and ritual practices; furthermore, Plotinus' insistence on the idea that the cosmos is permeated with divinity is much closer to Iamblichus' theurgic worldview than is commonly recognised.

Porphyry on the Descent of the Soul and Theurgy

Even if Plotinus subscribed to the view of part of the soul as undescended and remaining in Intellect (*Nous*), did Porphyry necessarily hold the same position? *In Timaeum* Fragment 87 does not mention Porphyry, while *De Anima* 6 attributes considerable uncertainty to Porphyry's position, stating that Porphyry is in two minds on the subject, sometimes disassociating himself from this view and at other times adopting it as a doctrine from above.[106] This is hardly an unequivocal identification of Porphyry's position on the issue of the undescended soul with that of Plotinus. Porphyry's own words in his *Life of Plotinus* 13, which recall his questioning of Plotinus for three days regarding the soul's relationship with the body, may well be relevant here, suggesting uncertainty regarding certain issues pertaining to the status of the human soul.

The strongest evidence that Porphyry thought that part of the soul remained in Intellect is *De abstinentia* I.29, where he states that the real self is Intellect.[107] Yet in the same passage he is keen to emphasise that contemplation is much more than learning or progress by quantity of arguments, for if this was the case there would be nothing to prevent those who accumulated all kinds of learning from

[103] Plotinus, *Enn.* II.9 [33] 9.30–44; 9.55–60.

[104] Armstrong (1967), 204; Van den Berg (1999), 355.

[105] Porphyry, *Plot.* 10; Van den Berg (1999), 355.

[106] For Porphyry's attitude towards theurgy, cf. also Chapter 3, pp. 98–102; Chapter 5, pp. 180–181. Iamblichus, *De An.* 6.10–12 (365). Cf. Smith (1974), 47, n. 10; Steel (1978), 31–33.

[107] Porphyry, *Abst.* 1.29.4. Cf. Shaw (1995), 13; (1997), 180, n. 19.

being happy; happiness rather comes from purification of words and actions and changing 'our present life for another' (ζωὴν δεῖ ἀντὶ ζωῆς ἀλλάξασθαι τῆς νῦν).[108] This demonstrates that Porphyry conceived of certain actions and ways of living as preparing the philosopher for assimilation with the divine; in other words ethical and ritual receptivity are paramount for the philosopher. Porphyry also states that the philosopher works to approach the god who rules all 'alone to the alone' (μόνος μόνῳ).[109] Yet it is clear that he conceives of this task in *ritual* terms, calling the philosopher the 'priest of the god who rules over all' (ὁ φιλόσοφος καὶ θεοῦ τοῦ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἱερεὺς) and comparing the philosopher's task to that of priests who set up cult-statues: 'the priest of the god who rules all is expert in the making of his cult-statue and in purifications and the other rites by which he is linked to the god' (ὁ τοῦ ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεοῦ ἱερεὺς ἔμπειρος τῆς αὐτοῦ ἀγαλματοποιίας καθάρσεών τε καὶ τῶν ἄλλων δι' ὧν συνάπτεται τῷ θεῷ.).[110] It seems that Porphyry attributes to certain philosophers (whom he defines precisely as those philosophers who make their happiness depend on assimilation to the divine) the same status as the group of humans whom Iamblichus characterises as those who employ intellectual power, have disengaged themselves from domination by nature and consequently participate in intellectual and incorporeal worship.[111] Yet both Iamblichus and Porphyry conceive of these individuals as participating in *ritual* sacrifice, but a kind of sacrifice that is immaterial and intellectual.[112] Additionally, Porphyry also recognises the importance of animal sacrifice for the rest of humanity.[113] Thus, he agrees with Iamblichus' division of humankind into three groups (for Porphyry, these groups are: philosophers who seek to assimilate themselves to the divine – other philosophers – the rest of humanity).[114] Although there is some disagreement between them regarding the correct modes of ritual worship, because Porphyry condemns animal sacrifice to a certain extent and plays down the necessity of the median group of philosophers making blood and material

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[108] Porphyry, *Abst.* 1.29.6; 1.29.1–6. Porphyry's words here exhibit a condemnation of rational *hubris* which Shaw (1995), 10–14, accuses Porphyry himself of.

[109] Porphyry, *Abst.* 2.49.1.

[110] Porphyry, *Abst.* 2.49.1; 2.49.3; *contra* Shaw (1995), 13. Furthermore, Porphyry praises the *priests* of the Egyptians (*Abst*. 4.6–10), Jews (4.11–14), Persians (the *Magi*: 4.16) and Indians (Brahmans: 4.17–18) for their disciplined and holy way of life, further suggesting that he sees the philosopher as the priest *par excellence*. Cf. Chapter 3, p. 89 and n. 35; Chapter 2, p. 48.

[111] Porphyry, *Abst.* 2.3.1; 1.54.6; 2.34.1 (cited in Chapter 3, p. 100, n. 89); 2.34.3; 2.45.3; 2.49.3; Iamblichus, *DM*, 5.18 (223.12–224.1).

[112] Porphyry, *Abst.* 2.34.3–5; 2.36.1–2; 2.45.4; 2.49.3; Iamblichus, *DM* 5.18 (225.1–4).

[113] Porphyry, *Abst.* 1.27.1–2; 2.3.1–2.

[114] Cf. also Plotinus' distinction between three groups of humans along the same lines at *Enn.* II.9.9.7–12, differentiated primarily according to their level of virtue and their focus on intelligible reality.

sacrifice much more than Iamblichus does, it should be noted that he does so partly against the background of Pythagoreanism; Pythagoreans were considered to have offered mostly bloodless sacrifices to the gods, including cakes formed in the shape of animals.[115] Porphyry's opening exhortation to Firmus Castricius mentions Pythagoras and Empedocles at least twice, locating both himself and Firmus within the ancient tradition of Pythagorean philosophy.[116] Iamblichus himself discusses Pythagoras' attitude towards sacrifice: he prescribed abstinence from all meat and non-blood sacrifice for the 'most contemplative group of philosophers' (τοῖς θεωρητικωτάτοις τῶν φιλοσόφων) and he himself lived according to these precepts, while he permitted the rest (those whose way of life was not completely holy and philosophical) to participate in blood sacrifice with set periods of abstinence and instructed them not to 'munch on the heart' nor 'eat brain', from which all Pythagoreans are banned.[117] Given that Iamblichus' work *On the Pythagorean Way of Life* uses Pythagoras' life as the paradigmatic example of the philosophical and divine life, it seems that his ascription to Pythagoras of the removal of blood sacrifice from the highest group of philosophers and cautious permission to the rest of his followers to participate in blood sacrifices (although with prescribed periods of abstinence) represents something of Iamblichus' own views on the issue of sacrifice.[118] Thus, it seems as though the differences between Porphyry and Iamblichus on the subject of blood sacrifice are not as clear-cut as scholars often maintain.[119] Porphyry's *De abstinentia* certainly marks a clear difference of emphasis between the two philosophers, yet the importance of the ethical and ritual receptivity and capacity of the worshipper, the suggestion of a continuous and cumulative ascent through different modes of sacrifice and the importance of a disciplined way of life represent significant points of convergence between the two philosophers.

The exact nature of Porphyry's involvement with theurgy remains difficult to ascertain. In this regard, scholars have been very much influenced by the comments of Augustine:

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[115] Porphyry, *Abst.* 2.36–1–2, for Pythagorean immaterial sacrifices of numbers and geometric figures. Cf. Plutarch, *De Is.* 355; 363a. Mathematics in Pythagorean worship: Iamblichus, *VP* 19.93; 28.147; 28.152; Shaw (1995), 189–198; Clark (2000), 154, n. 296.

[116] Porphyry, *Abst.* 1.1.1; 1.2.3; 1.3.3. Clark (2000a), 21, n. 2, notes that the reference to 'those men, at once ancient and godfearing, who pointed out the way' (1.1.1) probably refers to Pythagoras and Empedocles, as Porphyry's words at 1.3.3 imply, while in his preface Porphyry includes himself with Castricius, but in 1.2.3 and 1.3.3 he emphasises Castricius' commitment to Pythagoreanism, because it was the latter who had lapsed from vegetarianism.

[117] Iamblichus, *VP* 24.107–109. Cf. also 28.150; 16.68; 11.54.

[118] On the protreptic purpose of Iamblichus' work, which presents Pythagoras' life as a paradigm for theurgy: Dillon and Hershbell (1991), 3; 25; 28–29.

[119] Cf. Edwards (1993a), 159–172.

Nam et Porphyrius quandam quasi purgationem animae per theurgian, cunctanter tamen et pudibunda quodam modo disputatione promittit; reuersionem uero ad Deum hanc artem praestare cuiquam negat; ut uideas eum inter uitium sacrilegae curiositatis et philosophiae professionem sententiis alternantibus fluctuare. Nunc enim hanc artem tamquam fallacem et in ipsa actione periculosam et legibus prohibitam cauendam monet; nunc autem uelut eius laudatoribus cedens utilem dicit esse mundandae parti animae, non quidem intellectuali, qua rerum intellegibilium percipitur ueritas, nullas habentium similitudines corporum; sed spiritali, qua corporalium rerum capiuntur imagines. Hanc enim dicit per quasdam consecrationes theurgicas, quas teletas uocant, idoneam fieri atque aptam susceptioni spirituum et angelorum et ad uidendos deos. Ex quibus tamen theurgicis teletis fatetur intellectuali animae nihil purgationis accedere, quod eam faciat idoneam ad uidendum Deum suum et perspicienda ea, quae uere sunt ... Denique animam rationalem siue, quod magis amat dicere, intellectualem, in sua posse dicit euadere, etiamsi quod eius spiritale est nulla theurgica fuerit arte purgatum; porro autem a theurgo spiritalem purgari hactenus, ut non ex hoc ad inmortalitatem aeternitatemque perueniat.

Porphyry goes so far as to promise some sort of purification of the soul by means of theurgy, though to be sure he is reluctant to commit himself, and seems to blush with embarrasment in his argument. On the other hand, he denies that this art offers to anyone a way of return to God; and so one can observe him maintaining two contradictory positions, and wavering between a superstition which amounts to the sin of blasphemy, and a philosophical standpoint. For at one moment he is warning us to beware of such practices as fraudulent, fraught with danger in their performance, and prohibited by law, and the next minute he seems to be surrendering to the supporters of magic, saying that the art is useful for the purification of one part of the soul. This is not the 'intellectual' element by which is perceived the truth of intelligible realities which have no resemblance to material substances; it is the 'spiritual' part of the soul, by which it apprehends the images of material things. Porphyry declares that by means of certain 'theurgic consecrations', which are called *teletae*, this spiritual element of the soul is put into a proper condition, capable of welcoming spirits and angels, and of seeing the gods. But he admits at the same time that those 'theurgic rites' do not effect any purification of the intellectual soul which would fit it to see its God and to apprehend the true realities ... In fact, he says that the rational soul (or, as he prefers, the 'intellectual' soul) can escape into its own sphere, even without any purification of the spiritual element by means of 'theurgic art', and further, that the purification of the spiritual part by theurgy does not go so far as to assure its attainment of immortality and eternity.[120]

[120] Augustine, *City of God* 10.9.13–30; 32–37. Cf. also 10.27.8–29; 10.27.59–64; 10.28.8–26; 10.32.

Scholars generally take Augustine's comments as an accurate portrayal of Porphyry's views on theurgy – that theurgy was useful for the purification of the lower soul, but had no effect on the superior, 'intellectual' soul, which could return to the divine without theurgical assistance.[121] However, there are reasonable grounds for being very cautious in any attempt to interpret this fragment, especially given Augustine's polemical agenda. As discussed in Chapter 2, Augustine did not aim to give a balanced review of Porphyry's statements.[122] While it is fairly certain that this fragment cites a section of Porphyry's *De regressu animae*, we do not know what Porphyry included before and after this fragment: he may well have included some kind of caveat which qualifies or softens this view, or places it within a wider context.[123] For Augustine, Porphyry was a formidable enemy of the Christians, the Platonic philosopher *par excellence* and a spokesman for pagan religion. Within the *City of God*, he clearly attempts to undermine the authority of Porphyry by claiming that the philosopher offers contradictory views in general but particularly with regard to theurgy.[124] We have already seen that Eusebius, who held a similar polemical agenda against Porphyry, took advantage of Porphyry's 'paratactic' literary style and intellectual honesty in order to discredit his views on pagan religious phenomena.[125] Eusebius deliberately conflates magical and theurgical practices in order to discredit the latter by associating it with magic (γοητεία). A similar conflation of magic and theurgy is evident in Augustine's polemical attack on Porphyry:

> *Fiebant autem simplici fide atque fiducia pietatis, non incantationibus et carminibus nefariae curiositatis arte compositis, quam uel magian uel detestabiliore nomine goetian uel honorabiliore theurgian uocant, qui quasi conantur ista discernere et inlicitis artibus deditos alios damnabiles, quos et maleficos uulgus appellat (hos enim ad goetian pertinere dicunt), alios autem laudabiles uideri uolunt, quibus theurgian deputant; cum sint utrique ritibus fallacibus daemonum obstricti sub nominibus angelorum.*
>
> They [i.e. Christian miracles] were achieved by simple faith and devout confidence, not by spells and charms composed according to the rules of criminal superstition, the craft which is called *magic, or sorcery – a name of detestation – or by the more honourable title of 'theurgy'.* For people attempt to make some sort of distinction between practitioners of illicit arts, who are to be condemned, classing these as 'sorcerers' (the popular name for this kind of thing is *'black magic'*) and

[121] Dodds (1951), 287; Fowden (1986), 132–133; Shaw (1995), 5; 14–15; Van den Berg (2001), 70; Digeser (2009), 89–90. Cf. the reservations of O'Meara (1959), 36–37.

[122] Chapter 2, p. 48, n. 17; n. 18.

[123] Clark (2007), 134.

[124] Augustine, *City of God* 10.9.16–18. Cf. Knipe (2009), 99, n. 33.

[125] See Chapter 3, pp. 91–95.

> others whom they are prepared to regard as praiseworthy, attributing to them the practice of *'theurgy.' In fact, both types are engaged in the fraudulent rites of demons, wrongly called angels* [my emphasis].[126]

In support of this conflation, Augustine relates an account, presumably derived from Porphyry's *De regressu animae*, whereby a good Chaldean theurgist was thwarted in his efforts to protect someone by a bad man, presumably a sorcerer.[127] Yet this account must surely be incomplete (in the sense that Porphyry must have provided some qualification to modify the account in his original work), for a passage of the *De abstinentia* advocates the view that sorcerers associate with wicked *daimones*, yet the holy man who is wise about the gods is protected and guarded by their assimilation to the divine, a view which is in accordance with Iamblichus' assertion that the theurgist in contact with the gods will be immune from all malignant influence, including wicked *daimones*.[128] Thus, it is possible that Augustine misrepresents or distorts Porphyrian views on theurgy to a certain extent in order to further undermine Porphyry's reputation and authority. In fact, Augustine particularly condemned theurgy and maintained that the later Platonists failed to live up to Plotinus' teachings and allowed themselves to be led astray by demonic powers and the theurgic rites that served them.[129] Augustine's condemnation of theurgy was probably partially motivated by theurgy's connections with, and justification and defence of, traditional 'pagan' religious practices, exemplified by Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*, a work which was used by the emperor Julian as the justification of and foundation for his restoration of traditional religious practices during his brief reign.[130] Augustine's polemical agenda and possible, active distortion of Porphyrian views may be apparent in his claim that Porphyry (through his endorsement of theurgy as purification for the

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[126] Augustine, *City of God* 10.9.3–12. Cf. also 10.10.8–10; 10.10.26–30; 10.11.1–3; 10.27.52–55.

[127] Augustine, *City of God* 10.9.49–56. Cf. Smith (1974), 129.

[128] Porphyry, *Abst.* 2.45.1–2; Iamblichus, *DM* 3.31 (176.3–178.13). Cf. also Porphyry, *Marc.* 21.9–14 (Des Places).

[129] Augustine, *City of God* 10.2-3; 10.27.8–11. Cf. Shaw (1985), 3; (1998), 225–227.

[130] On Julian's religious programme, and the influence of Plato and Iamblichus on this 'pagan restoration', cf., for example, O'Meara (2003), 120–131. It should be noted that Augustine only seems to have known Porphyry's work(s) on theurgy directly and does not seem to have read Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*, although scholars disagree with regard to exactly which Porphyrian works Augustine did read and have access to. Furthermore, it seems likely that Augustine had at least heard of Iamblichus and his work the *De Mysteriis*, given (1) his discussion of Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* in *City of God* 10.11; and (2) the enormous influence of Iamblichus and his works on Julian and the latter's references to Iamblichus within his works. Augustine would surely have been well aware of the reign of the emperor Julian, his pagan restoration and the influence of Iamblichus on both.

'spiritual' element of the soul) has recruited many candidates for the 'secret and illegal' masters of theurgy; this represents deliberate distortion, for while pagan religious and magical practices were illegal at the time Augustine was writing, the former (pagan religious practices) and probably the latter (magic) were not illegal in Porphyry's time (before A.D. 305), as Augustine well knew.[131] Thus, there are some grounds for the possibility of deliberate distortion in Augustine's representation of Porphyry's views on theurgy, but at the least some misrepresentation or distortion on Augustine's part in relating Porphyrian views on theurgy is probable, given Augustine's polemical agenda to undermine Porphyry's credibility.

If Augustine does represent Porphyry's attitude at all accurately, it is interesting that Porphyry uses Chaldean terminology to describe the highest ends attainable to human beings, that is, the return to the Father.[132] This may point towards a conception of a kind of 'higher' theurgy (the advanced stage of immaterial or incorporeal theurgic practice) in Porphyry based on that implied within the extant fragments of the *Chaldean Oracles*, several of which also allude to the soteriological nature of theurgy to effect the immortalisation of the soul.[133] In fact, given that a kind of 'higher' theurgy is clearly implied in the *Chaldean Oracles* and that Porphyry had written a commentary on the latter, there is some inconsistency at least in Augustine's claims that Porphyry considered theurgy only to purify the 'spiritual' soul but not the intellectual soul and, furthermore, that theurgy could not make the soul immortal.[134] If Augustine is genuinely reporting Porphyry's views here, substantial disagreement between Porphyry and the *Chaldean Oracles* has to be assumed, which seems unlikely given that Porphyry had written a lengthy commentary on the latter and, as Augustine himself relates, Porphyry frequently

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[131] Augustine, *City of God*, 10.27.17–25; 10.28.11–18. Theurgy is never explicitly mentioned in Roman legislation against 'magic'. Moreover, in Porphyry's lifetime, 'magical' practices *per se* do not seem to have been illegal under Roman law (mostly, cases involving harm to another person or property via magical means were illegal before Constantine's legislation (leaving aside occasional political expulsions relating to imperial issues), although relevant evidence is somewhat ambiguous and certain restrictions may have been introduced by the Tetrarchy). For a useful summary of the relevant legal precepts and issues see Gordon (1999), 259–261. Furthermore, the Christian religion was actually made illegal by Diocletian near the end of Porphyry's life and the Persecution of the Christians was undertaken by Diocletian and his imperial colleagues between A.D. 297 and 303, as Augustine explicitly discusses in *City of God* 10.32.45–57 in relation to the theme of Christianity as the universal way to salvation.

[132] Porphyry, *De regressu animae* F4 (Bidez) = F288a (Muscolini) = Augustine, *City of God* 10.27.25–29; 52–55.

[133] Augustine, *City of God* 10.27.25–29. 'Higher' theurgy in the *Chaldean Oracles*: F1; F2; F9a; F17; F109; F111; F112; F116; F139; possibly F117; F119; F217. Porphyry's use of Chaldean terminology here has been noted by Smith (1974), 130.

[134] Augustine, *City of God* 10.27.

quoted and had recourse to oracles from the Chaldean collection.[135] As discussed above, Porphyry's *De abstinentia* advises and prescribes for the philosopher silent worship of the Father and verbal prayers and hymns for the noetic gods, comparing the philosopher's task to those of priests who set up cult-statues; this indicates that Porphyry conceives of this task in *ritual* terms and that he did endorse some ritual practice akin to 'higher theurgy'.[136] Furthermore, according to Augustine, Porphyry admits that humans can interact with the exalted levels of the universe, with the ethereal and empyrean realms, and theurgists can therefore obtain revelations and divine prophecies from the gods and can make contact with the gods of the ether; the use of Chaldean terminology (ethereal and empyrean realms), the ascription of the possibility of etherial elevation to the theurgists and the endorsement of the idea that theurgists receive oracles from the gods, all point towards a greater valuation of theurgy on Porphyry's part than that ostensibly claimed here by Augustine.[137] In Chapter 3, I have attempted to demonstrate the possible theurgic basis and ideas which underlie Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*. Thus, it seems probable that Porphyry had a more favourable attitude towards theurgy than has commonly been recognised. However it is difficult to fully reconstruct Porphyry's views on theurgy, given the lack of evidence.

Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* and Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* as a Dialogue: Part 2

If Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* and Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* comprise a mystagogic dialogue, what are the key purposes of such a dialogue? I argue below that their exchange comprises a type of philosophical and religious discourse with protreptic, educational and initiatory functions. Yet some reflections on the form and structure of this dialogue seem essential. The form and structure of this mystagogic dialogue is itself connected with and reflects the content and subject-matter of the *De Mysteriis*: since divination plays a key role in theurgy and since divination always involves dialogue, the dialogic structure involving question and answer is particularly suitable for such a discussion. Divination generally involves dialogue between the client and seer or prophet (in question and answer format) but also implicitly assumes a dialogue between client and/or prophet and a god or some other type of divine being.[138]

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[135] Augustine, *City of God* 10.32.29–31: 'and he certainly could not keep quiet about his borrowing of 'divine oracles' from the Chaldeans, those oracles which he refers to so continually' (*et utique se a Chaldaeis oracula diuina sumpsisse, quorum adsiduam commemorationem facit, tacere non potuit*).

[136] Cf. p. 151, n. 110 above; Porphyry, *Abst.* 2.49.1; 2.49.3; *contra* Shaw (1995), 13.

[137] Augustine, *City of God* 10.26.4–5; 10.26.24–27; 10.27.8–11.

[138] Dialogue and Greek Oracles: Stoneman (2011). Divine and human dialogue in Mesopotamian divination: Rochberg (2004), 185–202. Divination and dialogue: cf. the

The *persona* of the Egyptian prophet Abammon assumed by Iamblichus becomes particularly appropriate when the *De Mysteriis* and the *Letter to Anebo* are viewed from this perspective. The exact meaning of the pseudonym has been a source of debate: Saffrey argued it meant 'Father of Ammon' (Ammon was an Egyptian god who was often equated with Zeus), since *aba* is Syriac, Chaldean and Hebrew for 'father'.[139] This suggestion was effectively refuted by Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell on the grounds that, firstly, it seems unlikely that Iamblichus would refer to himself in such exalted terms, since Ammon represents to him 'demiurgic intellect, the champion of truth and wisdom, entering into generation, and leading the unseen power of the hidden doctrines into light'.[140] Secondly, they point out that the god's name is spelled 'Ammôn', even by Iamblichus himself, while the pseudonym is often given in the text as Abamon.[141] Thus they suggest that there is probably no reference to the gods at all and that Iamblichus had simply chosen an Egyptian-sounding name.[142] John Bussanich has pointed out that this latter explanation seems inadequate for Iamblichus who is so devoted to Egyptian and Hermetic wisdom and for whom the precise use of language in prayers and invocations is *de rigueur*. Bussanich's alternative suggestion that Abamon might mean 'priest of Ammon', since *ab* might also bear that sense, seems extremely likely, given Iamblichus' theurgic defence in this work.[143]

If Abammon means 'priest of Ammon', this name is particularly appropriate for the chief interlocutor of a mystagogic dialogue. Furthermore, Iamblichus may be deliberately imitating the graded processes of learning and initiation undertaken by priests in Egyptian temple complexes. As well as having paideutic and educational functions in a philosophical sense, the *De Mysteriis* may well have initiatory functions, as I explore below. Yet, whatever the precise meaning of the pseudonym, it is certainly clear that Iamblichus, as the Egyptian prophet Abammon, plays the part of the 'divine revealer' who expounds the divine mysteries of theurgy and religious practices to Porphyry. This function is connected with the purposes of inspired divination (μαντική) as used within theurgy, for Iamblichus claims that

collection of essays in Curry (ed.) (2010); Tedlock (2001), 189–197; (2007), 320; Cornelius (2007), 236. Dialogue, dialectic and divination in the Talmud and rabbinic Judaism: Boyarin (2008), 230–237. Oracles and dialectic: Iamblichus, *Letter 5: To Dexippus, On Dialectic*, 5.8–15.

139 Saffrey (1971), 234–235.

140 Clarke (2003), xxxiv. Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 8.3 (263.7–10).

141 Clarke (2003), xxxv, argues that the two occurrences of the pseudonym, printed as Ἀβάμμωνος by Des Places in his edition, are both in fact conjectures by Thomas Gale in his 1678 edition. She asserts that the two most important manuscripts of the text, V and M, read Ἀβάμονος at the first mention and Ἀβάμμωνος at the second. However, scribes could have misspelt the pseudonym and Iamblichus' rendering of the god's name.

142 Clarke (2003), xxxiv–xxxvii.

143 Bussanich (2005), 485.

theurgic divination is key to the process of divinisation and represents a stage on the way to mystical union, as well as being a sign and a symbol of conjunction and union with the gods. Theurgic divination therefore has little to do with everyday, practical matters or with predicting the future; rather, it is linked with the ascent of the initiate to the gods.[144] Iamblichus clearly takes on the role of the theurgic prophet, expounding the central principles of theurgy.[145] The structure of the mystagogic dialogue also reflects oracular divination and the oracular consultation process, of which the key features are the question of the enquirer and the oracular response. Critics may argue that there is a significant difference between oracular divination, where usually a single solution is given to the enquirer, and this dialogue, where Iamblichus proposes a range of solutions, yet it seems likely that Iamblichus, like Porphyry, would view many oracles as multivalent and containing a range of meanings.[146]

The Parallel between Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* and the *Hermetica*

Following on from this, there are also some grounds for claiming a very strong parallel between Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* and Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* on the one hand, and the philosophical writings of the *Hermetica* on the other, many of which were also written in dialogue form for the purpose of philosophical παιδεία.[147] A caveat must be mentioned immediately: I do not wish to suggest that the content, the philosophical concepts and notions contained within the *Hermetica*, match or parallel those evident in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*: it is rather the *structure* and *functions* of both works which are comparable.

Such a parallel seems particularly likely given the pseudonym used by Iamblichus in writing *De Mysteriis* and given his programmatic statements in the first chapter of his work. Whatever the precise meaning of the pseudonym, Iamblichus deliberately chose an Egyptian name in order to provide a frame and setting for his treatise. Pseudonymous and anonymous authorship was fairly

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144 Cf. Chapter 7, p. 272 and n. 145.

145 Given that Iamblichus himself was a theurgist, 'Abammon' could even refer to an entity that the philosopher considered himself to have been possessed by in the course of a divination ritual; Abammon could thus be the name of the god, an intermediary for the god or the soul of an Egyptian priest (just as the Juliani associated with composing the *Chaldean Oracles* were said to have been possessed by the soul of Plato). I owe this suggestion to Bruce Maclennan (private mail communication, 29 August 2012).

146 Cf. Iamblichus, *Letter 5: To Dexippus, On Dialectic*. Porphyry's view that oracles are multivalent: see Chapter 2, pp. 67–71.

147 Cf. Fowden (1986), 97–101, on the didactic and paideutic nature of the Hermetic dialogues.

common in Antiquity and, rather than being taken literally in this case, a more metaphorical explanation of its use is clear, as Clarke points out:

> Iamblichus was aware that Hermetic and Pythagorean works were attributed to Hermes and Pythagoras, and clearly understood these figures as the origin of or the inspiration for such works, rather than as their direct authors. With this in mind, Iamblichus' background role is justified as a link in the golden chain of anonymous interpreters of the divine word.[148]

The pseudonymous authorship combined with the philosophical dialogue between Porphyry and Iamblichus on religious phenomena represents a very similar case to some of the more philosophical treatises of the *Hermetica*, many of which were written in dialogue form.[149]

Moreover, at the beginning of *De Mysteriis*, Iamblichus specifically locates himself within the Egyptian religious tradition by allying himself with the ancient ranks of the Egyptian priesthood and by reminding us of the tradition that Greek philosophers, such as Pythagoras, Plato, Democritus and Eudoxus, first learnt wisdom from the Egyptians.[150] There is also a tacit link made between 'Abamon' and Hermes (θεὸς ὁ τῶν λόγων ἡγεμών), with whose name Iamblichus says such works are inscribed and dedicated.[151] Rather than direct identification with Hermes which, as Clarke notes, 'Iamblichus would surely see ... as impious',[152] Iamblichus places his work under the divine patronage of Hermes and also hints at the status of himself as exegete and of his text as a divine σύμβολον in the chain of the god Hermes.[153] Neoplatonic philosophers often associated themselves with the so-called 'Hermaic chain' (Ἑρμαικὴ σειρά): Eunapius states that Porphyry comes from the chain of Hermes, and Marinus says of Proclus, 'he clearly beheld that he was of the Hermaic chain'.[154] Furthermore, Iamblichus specifically refers to 'Hermetic books' (τὰς μὲν οὖν ὅλας Ἑρμῆς ἐν ταῖς δισμυρίαις βίβλοις...; 'the whole gamut, however, has been covered by Hermes in the twenty thousand books')

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148 Clarke (2001), 8; (2003), xxxi–xxxii. Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 1.1 (1–2); 8.4 (265. 10–266.1); *VP* 29.158; 31.198; Fowden (1986), 186–187.

149 Cf. Clarke (2001), 15, n. 34; (2003), xxxi, n. 61.

150 Iamblichus, *DM* 1.1 (2.8–3.4). Cf. also *DM* 7.5 (258.2–5); 8.5 (267.11–268.7); Clarke (2003), xxxii; Shaw (1995), 7–8.

151 Iamblichus, *DM* 1.1 (1-2.7). Cf. Clarke (2001), 9; (2003), xxxii; Iamblichus, *Letter 5: To Dexippus, On Dialectic* 5.1–3.

152 Clarke (2001), 16, n. 42. Cf. Larsen (1972), 157.

153 Cf. Addey (2007a), 52, for the thesis that Iamblichus' *DM* can itself be viewed as a textual σύμβολον; Rappe (2000), 167–179.

154 Eunapius, *VS* 457 (Porphyry); Marinus, *Proc.* 28 (Proclus); Fowden (1986), 201–202.

and 'the way of Hermes,' allusions which seem irrevocably to refer to the *Hermetica*.[155] He also implies that Porphyry had also read these 'books of Hermes.'[156] In addition, Iamblichus explicitly claims that theurgy is derived from ancient Egyptian religious practices.[157] Within *De Mysteriis*, he discusses Egyptian religious symbolism, offering an allegorical interpretation of three popular symbols, an analysis of the zodiac and the sacred barbarian names.[158] Book 8 examines Egyptian theology, discussing the Primary cause, the One, the divine Father of the First Intelligibles and the gods, as well as Hermetic astrology and fatality.[159]

The Educational and Initiatory Functions of Religious Dialogue in Iamblichus' De Mysteriis *and the* Hermetica

The educational and initiatory function of certain dialogues within the philosophical *Hermetica* has been emphasised by Garth Fowden: different dialogues are aimed at different levels of initiate; from certain initiatory texts within the *Hermetica* we can construct a picture of the various stages of the Hermetic *paideia*.[160] Furthermore, Fowden has explicitly compared the teaching and learning structure of Hermetic initiates with that practised by Neoplatonic philosophers, stating that they 'proceed systematically from elementary to more sophisticated texts, just as the Platonic philosophers of the age graded Plato's dialogues, for teaching purposes, according to their greater or lesser explicitness about the things of the spirit'.[161] Indeed Iamblichus seems to have been the first Neoplatonic philosopher to establish a definite order and number of Platonic dialogues to be studied within his philosophical school.[162]

Yet the possible educational and protreptic functions of his exchange with Porphyry in the *Letter to Anebo* and the *De Mysteriis* have largely gone unnoticed.

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155 Iamblichus, *DM* 8.1 (260.14–261.3); 8.4 (265.10–266.1); 8.5 (267.11–268.9). Cf. Fowden (1986), 131–141.

156 Iamblichus, *DM* 8.4 (265.9–10). Cf. Fowden (1986), 137.

157 Iamblichus, *DM* 7.1 (249.10–250.5); 8.5 (268.5–7); 8.8 (272.1–4). Cf. Shaw (1995), 47, n. 6.

158 Egyptian symbolism: Iamblichus, *DM* 7; Allegorical interpretation of symbols: *DM* 7.2; the Zodiac: *DM* 7.3; sacred barbarian names: *DM* 7.4–5.

159 Egyptian theology: Iamblichus, *DM* 8; the Primary cause, the One: *DM* 8.2; the divine Father of the First Intelligibles and the gods: *DM* 8.3; Hermetic astrology and fatality: *DM* 8.4–8. Cf. Clark (2008), 164–205.

160 Fowden (1986), 98–100. Cf. especially *Corpus Hermeticum* XIII, 1–2; *Corpus Hermeticum* I, 1, 29, *The Poimandres*. The so-called *Discourse on the Ogdoad and the Ennead* (Codex VI.6), a treatise from the Coptic Hermetica found at Nag Hammadi, also exhibits an initiatory structure: cf. Mahé (1998), 79–86.

161 Fowden (1986), 99.

162 Dillon (2004), 408.

Given that the exchange between Porphyry and Iamblichus is a dialogue on religious phenomena including philosophical explanations of such phenomena, it is worthwhile to compare the stages of *paideia*, preparation (ethical, ritual and intellectual) and initiation evident in the philosophical *Hermetica* with the ritual path of theurgic ascent described by Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*. For example, *Corpus Hermeticum* XIII opens with the character Tat beseeching his 'father' Hermes Trismegistus to teach him about the doctrine of rebirth:

> Ἐν τοῖς Γενικοῖς, ὦ πάτερ, αἰνιγματωδῶς καὶ οὐ τηλαυγῶς ἔφρασας, περὶ θειότητος διαλεγόμενος· οὐκ ἀπεκάλυψας, φάμενος μηδένα δύνασθαι σωθῆναι πρὸ τῆς παλιγγενεσίας· ἐμοῦ τε σοῦ ἱκέτου γενομένου, ἐπὶ τῆς τοῦ ὄρους καταβάσεως, μετὰ τὸ σὲ ἐμοὶ διαλεχθῆναι πυθομένου τὸν τῆς παλιγγενεσίας λόγον μαθεῖν, ὅτι τοῦτον παρὰ πάντα μόνον ἀγνοῶ, καὶ ἔφης, ὅταν μέλλῃς κόσμου ἀπαλλοτριοῦσθαι, παραδιδόναι μοι. ἕτοιμος ἐγενόμην καὶ ἀπηνδρείωσα τὸ ἐν ἐμοὶ φρόνημα ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ἀπάτης· σὺ δέ μου καὶ τὰ ὑστερήματα ἀναπλήρωσον οἷς ἔφης μοι παλιγγενεσίας <γένεσιν> παραδοῦναι προθέμενος ἐκ φωνῆς ἢ κρυβήν·[163]
>
> My father, you spoke indistinctly and in riddles (αἰνιγματωδῶς) when talking about divinity in the *General Discourses*; claiming that no one can be saved before being born again, you offered no revelation. But after you talked with me coming down from the mountain, I became your suppliant and asked to learn the discourse on being born again since, of all the discourses, this one alone I do not know. And you said you would deliver it to me when 'you were about to become a stranger to the cosmos.' I have prepared myself, and I have steeled my purpose against the deceit of the cosmos. Grant me what I need and give me – whether aloud or in secret – the <discourse on> being born again that you said you would deliver.[164]

Here we see that certain ethical and intellectual (and possibly ritual) preparations had to be undertaken by the Hermetic initiate before they received certain teachings from their spiritual master or guide. The stages of *paideia* necessary for initiation into the Hermetic path are clearly alluded to within this treatise. In this

[163] *Corpus Hermeticum* XIII, 1.1–16, *A secret dialogue of Hermes Trismegistus on the mountain to his son Tat: On being born again, and on the promise to be silent*, ed. Nock and Festugière (1945), Vol. 2. All citations of this work are taken from this edition.

[164] *Corpus Hermeticum* XIII, 1, trs. Copenhaver (1992; repr. 1996). All translations of this work are from this edition. Scott (1924; repr. 1993), 374, dates this treatise to the late third century A.D.; if this dating is correct, this treatise would be roughly contemporary with the *Letter to Anebo* and *De Mysteriis*.

instance, the preparation is partly ascetic, involving 'becoming a stranger to the cosmos', although it may also refer to intellectual and philosophical purification as well. While such an injunction is unlikely to have been endorsed by Iamblichus, the idea that one has to cultivate an appropriate state of receptivity in order to gain intellectual and divine insight is a central tenet of his.[165] It forms the foundation of theurgic practices and ritual.

Later in the treatise *Corpus Hermeticum* XIII, after Tat has received the doctrines from his father, we see his moment of insight into the nature of rebirth which is clearly envisaged as an initiation, where Tat himself is reborn in his new knowledge:

> Ἀκλινὴς γενόμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὦ πάτερ, φαντάζομαι, οὐχ ὁράσει ὀφθαλμῶν ἀλλὰ τῇ διὰ δυνάμεων νοητικῇ ἐνεργείᾳ...πάτερ, τὸ πᾶν ὁρῶ καὶ ἐμαυτὸν ἐν τῷ νοΐ.
>
> Since god has made me tranquil, father, I no longer picture things with the sight of my eyes but with the mental energy that comes through the powers ... Father, I see the universe and I see myself in mind.[166]

Having heard Tat's expression of his readiness to hear this secret doctrine, we now see his 'moment of initiation' as he experiences the truth of the doctrine, and consequently experiences transformation described here as rebirth. Another treatise describes the dream vision of a Hermetic initiate who is visited by the supreme Mind (here called Poimandres) who teaches him about the successive levels of reality emanating from the One:

> Ἐννοίας μοί ποτε γενομένης περὶ τῶν ὄντων καὶ μετεωρισθείσης μοι τῆς διανοίας σφόδρα, κατασχεθεισῶν μου τῶν σωματικῶν αἰσθήσεων, καθάπερ οἱ ὕπνῳ βεβαρημένοι ἐκ κόρου τροφῆς ἢ ἐκ κόπου σώματος, ἔδοξά τινα ὑπερμεγέθη μέτρῳ ἀπεριορίστῳ τυγχάνοντα καλεῖν μου τὸ ὄνομα καὶ λέγοντά μοι, Τί βούλει ἀκοῦσαι καὶ θεάσασθαι, καὶ νοήσας μαθεῖν καὶ γνῶναι – φημὶ ἐγώ, Σὺ γὰρ τίς εἶ –Ἐγὼ μέν, φησίν, εἰμὶ ὁ Ποιμάνδρης, ὁ τῆς αὐθεντίας νοῦς· οἶδα ὃ βούλει, καὶ σύνειμί σοι πανταχοῦ. – φημὶ ἐγώ, Μαθεῖν θέλω τὰ ὄντα καὶ νοῆσαι τὴν τούτων φύσιν καὶ γνῶναι τὸν θεόν· πῶς, ἔφην, ἀκοῦσαι βούλομαι. – φησὶν ἐμοὶ πάλιν,Ἔχε νῷ σῷ ὅσα θέλεις μαθεῖν, κἀγώ σε διδάξω.

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[165] Receptivity in theurgy: Chapter 1, pp. 26–28; Iamblichus, *VP* 16.68–69; 17.71–74; 18.80–83; 19.90; 20.94–95.

[166] *Corpus Hermeticum* XIII, 11.3–5; 13.3.

> Once, when thought came to me of the things that are and my thinking soared high and my bodily senses were restrained, like someone heavy with sleep from too much eating or toil of the body, an enormous being completely unbounded in size seemed to appear to me and call my name and say to me: 'What do you want to hear and see; what do you want to learn and know from your understanding?' 'Who are you?' I asked. 'I am Poimandres,' he said, 'mind of sovereignty; I know what you want, and I am with you everywhere.' I said, 'I wish to learn about the things that are, to understand their nature and to know god. How much I want to hear!' Then he said to me: 'Keep in mind all that you wish to learn, and I will teach you.'[167]

Here, we see the spiritual or mystical experience of *Nous*, the divine mind, described as a dialogue between the Hermetic initiate (the prophet Hermes Trismegistus) and *Nous* itself. The so-called *Discourse on the Ogdoad and the Ennead* (Codex VI.6), a treatise from the Coptic *Hermetica* found at Nag Hammadi, also exhibits an initiatory structure.[168]

In what ways can Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* be viewed as having educational, protreptic and initiatory functions? The answer may well be linked with the programmatic statements contained in the opening of the work, where Iamblichus states that it is necessary to speak in three modes of discourse: in theurgic terms for issues concerning theurgy, in a theological mode for theological questions and in philosophical terms for philosophical issues.[169] The philosophical and theological modes of discourse have obvious protreptic and educational functions, leading the reader through a series of logical arguments relating to the nature of the gods and the proper modes of worshipping them.

I would suggest that the theurgic mode of discourse relates to the initiatory functions of the *De Mysteriis*. Some caution is needed here, for in his opening statements Iamblichus maintains that 'Some of these [questions], such as require experience of actions [i.e. theurgy] for their accurate understanding, it will not be possible <to deal with adequately> by words alone' (Καὶ τὰ μὲν ἔργων πείρας δεόμενα πρὸς ἀκριβῆ κατανόησιν, μόνον διὰ λόγων (ἀ)δύνατόν).[170] Given Iamblichus' methodological claim to deal in theurgic terms for issues concerning theurgy, this note of caution clearly relates to the theurgic mode of discourse, which in itself is somewhat paradoxical and seems to point towards the necessity of the reader's ritual experience and of reading some passages in the *De Mysteriis* as a guided visualisation or meditation in *ritual* terms, rather

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167 *Corpus Hermeticum* 1.1.1–1.3.14, ed. Nock and Festugière (1945), Vol. 1.

168 Cf. Mahé (1998), 79–86.

169 Iamblichus, *DM* 1.2 (7.3–5). Cf. Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell (2003), 11, n. 21.

170 Iamblichus, *DM* 1.2 (6.6–7). Here I accept Gale's conjecture ἀδύνατον for the MSS δυνατόν, following Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell (2003), 11, n. 18, who also note that there may be deeper corruption here. There are lacunae in both V and M in this passage.

than as a straightforward philosophical discourse; in fact, this statement suggests that to read the 'theurgic' passages of the *De Mysteriis* without ritual experience will entail misunderstanding.[171] I have suggested elsewhere that *De Mysteriis* Book 3, which deals with divination, could itself be viewed as a textual *symbolon* and as a sacred, ritualistic invocation of the divine reality which it describes.[172] This idea depends on the view that language itself can be a *symbolon*.[173] Sara Rappe has demonstrated that Proclus' *Platonic Theology* presents itself as a theurgic, textual *symbolon* with the status of a ritual invocation, since it enumerates successive orders of gods and metaphysical reality.[174] Rappe adds the crucial caveat that the goal of this kind of theurgic ritual was not to increase our understanding of the text, but to pass *through* the text as theurgic symbol to a unitive experience beyond words; this important statement which captures the centre of theurgic ritual is vital to remember in any consideration of the 'theurgic' passages of the *De Mysteriis*.[175] Meanwhile, Saffrey has suggested that for Proclus metaphysical enquiry becomes an act of worship, a view that is seemingly equally applicable to Iamblichus.[176] I have argued that the structure of Book 3 reflects and symbolises the course of procession and of illumination from the divine to the mortal realm and the reversion to the divine from the mortal world through different types and levels of divination and divine possession; in this sense, Book 3 reflects the cycle of procession and reversion and traverses the metaphysical and psychic landscape of ascent and descent.[177] I would also suggest that the whole of the *De Mysteriis* reflects the cyclic course of procession and reversion, of descent and ascent (and thus the work has a circular structure), since it begins and ends with discussions of the gods (*DM* 1) and theurgy as the gateway to the Good (*DM* 10) and then (following Book 1) exhibits a cumulative and circular structure reflecting the cycle of procession and reversion: the procession of divine illumination is successively

[171] It is particularly intriguing that one such passage (*DM* 2.11 [96.9–15]), which is explicitly stated by Iamblichus to 'say something more on the theurgic level' (θεουργικώτερον εἰπεῖν τι) (96.7–8), is one of the key passages cited by scholars to support a strict division between philosophy and theurgy. Iamblichus' subsequent assertion a few lines later that 'Effective union certainly never takes place without knowledge, but nevertheless is not identical with it' (98.6–7) tends to be ignored or elided. Cf., for example, Shaw (2007b), 71.

[172] Addey (2007a). 52.

[173] Iamblichus, *DM* 5.15 (219.1–220.14), where a kind of sacrifice that is wholly immaterial is mentioned; Uzdavinys (2010), 207–217.

[174] Rappe (2000), 167–179.

[175] Rappe (2000), 20; 231–243; Shaw (2007b), 72.

[176] Saffrey (1990), Part III.

[177] I owe this phrase to Rappe (2000), 179, who states: 'As if it were a theurgic rite, combining all the divine series in order to re-create a sacralised cosmos, the *Platonic Theology* divulges a kind of cosmic prehistory, in which the psychic landscape, the geography of ascent and descent, is traversed in detail.'

described by the epiphanies of the gods (*DM* 2) and divine possession and divination (*DM* 3). The reversion from the mortal world to the divine begins with the problem of suffering and apparent evil (*DM* 4), sacrifice (*DM* 5 and 6), invocations and divine names (*DM* 6 and 7), Egyptian symbols (*DM* 7), Egyptian theology and metaphysics (*DM* 8), the issue of the personal *daimon* (*DM* 9) and finally, theurgy as divinisation and the only true path to salvation (*DM* 10). Such a structure may have been intended as an initiatory tool for philosophical contemplation leading to theurgic visions for the ideal 'philosophic' or 'theurgic' reader: in this sense Iamblichus' text could itself be viewed as having protreptic and initiatory functions. Thus, to view Iamblichus' work as a textual *symbolon* surely helps to clarify his methodological claim at the beginning of his work (1.2) to deal in theurgic terms with issues concerning theurgy.

Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* and Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*: A Religious Defence against the Christians?

If Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* and Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* are viewed from the perspective of dialogic philosophical discourse stemming from the tradition of the Platonic dialogue and as works in the 'Problems–Solutions' genre, there are grounds to argue that Porphyry *deliberately asked* Iamblichus a series of provocative questions on theurgy and religious phenomena as an *impetus* for him to write a treatise defending and explaining theurgy and other pagan religious phenomena, primarily for the educational and initiatory reasons and functions detailed above, but *secondarily* as a defence against contemporary Christian polemic. It is important to note the secondary function of this defence against Christian polemic and not to confuse this issue with the claim that the works were written to compete with Christianity directly.[178]

In Chapter 3, we saw that Porphyry wrote anti-Christian works and that he was considered by Christian authors to be a formidable enemy of Christianity.[179] Furthermore, Porphyry's (now fragmentary) work *On Statues* defends the use of images and may represent tacit polemic against Christian accusations of idolatry: one fragment of the work states that 'it is no surprise that statues are thought to be nothing but wood and stone by the most uneducated' (θαυμαστὸν δὲ οὐδὲν ξύλα καὶ λίθους ἡγεῖσθαι τὰ ξόανα τοὺς ἀμαθεστάτους).[180] Earlier pagan critics such as Celsus had styled the Christians as 'uneducated', suggesting that such criticism in Porphyry's work may be directed specifically against

[178] Clarke (2001), 2; Shaw (2012), 92, n. 8, contains a summary of such views.

[179] Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 84–88.

[180] Porphyry, *De Stat.* 351F, lines 20-21 (Smith); cf. 353F.

Christians.[181] Several of the questions raised by Porphyry in the *Letter to Anebo* correspond to common Christian criticisms of pagan religious phenomena: we have already seen that Iamblichus reports a question raised by Porphyry implying that deceptive *daimones* might be the cause of divination.[182] Christian writers deliberately conflated the pagan gods with evil *daimones* and argued that oracles and other forms of divination were obtained from them rather than from gods.[183] In his response to this question, Iamblichus refers to 'the opinion of the atheists' (τὴν τῶν ἀθέων δόξαν), a clear allusion to the Christians.[184] In *De Mysteriis* 10, Iamblichus makes another allusion to the Christians:

> εἰκῆ τοίνυν τὰ τοιαῦτα καὶ παρὰ σοὶ καὶ παρ' ἄλλοις τισὶ θρυλλεῖται.' Αλλ' οὐδὲ ὅσα ὡς ἀγύρτας καὶ ἀλαζόνας διασύρουσί τινες τοὺς τῶν θεῶν θεραπευτάς, οἷς καὶ σύ παραπλήσια εἴρηκας, οὐδὲν οὐδὲ ταῦτα ἅπτεται τῆς ἀληθινῆς θεολογίας τε καὶ θεουργίας.
>
> In vain, therefore, are such allegations bandied about by yourself and some others. And not even those gibes with which some ridicule those who worship the gods as 'vagabonds' and 'charlatans,' the like of which you put forward, apply at all to true theology or theurgy.[185]

The mockery of those who worship the gods as 'charlatans' sounds very much like a reference to the Christians, of whom Iamblichus clearly holds such a low opinion that he does not even name them.[186] In line with Greek and Egyptian cultural and religious beliefs, Iamblichus held that names and words have an intrinsic and inherent power, which may represent his chief reason for not mentioning the Christians by name. Thus, on at least two separate occasions, Iamblichus accuses

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[181] Cf. Edwards (2004), 219–220, who also notes that the term *agrammatoi* is used in the New Testament to characterise the first apostles (Acts 4:13) and that Porphyry knew that the apostles had spoken of the immaterial nature as light and spirit; thus, Edwards sees polemic in Porphyry's *On Statues* 353F, which contrasts the ethereal radiance of the divine with its appearances in matter, especially in translucent materials such as crystal, Parian stone or ivory, and in gold which suffers no corruption and thus preserves a trace of divine fire and incorruptibility.

[182] Cf. above pp. 140–141; *DM* 3.31 (175.12–176.1); Clarke (2001), 73.

[183] Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 106–109.

[184] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.31 (179.9–180.3); Edwards (1993a), 168–169; Clarke (2001), 73; 88, n. 23 and 24; (2003), xxviii; 201, n. 246.

[185] Iamblichus, *DM* 10.2 (287.4–8).

[186] Edwards (1993a), 168–169, who also detects some subtle allusions to Christian hagiographic works in Iamblichus' description of Pythagoras at *VP* 14–16 and 21. Eunapius also alludes to the Christians without naming them: cf. *VS* 461; 462.

Porphyry of introducing Christian accusations, questions and challenges in the *Letter to Anebo*. Given Porphyry's writings against the Christians and his role as a famous adversary of them, it seems possible that Porphyry could have deliberately put views and questions to Iamblichus that reflected Christian opinions and criticisms of traditional Graeco-Roman religion, knowing that Iamblichus would provide a thorough and rigorous philosophical refutation of such views.

Conclusion

I have suggested that the exchange between Porphyry and Iamblichus evident in the *Letter to Anebo* and the *De Mysteriis* operates within two traditional philosophical genres: firstly, that of 'Problems and Solutions' and secondly, that of Platonic dialogue. Viewed from this perspective, both Porphyry as a philosopher and the *Letter to Anebo* are located more firmly within the Platonic tradition of dialogic discourse; at the very least, this location surely concurs more fully with Porphyry's self-identity and is surely more in line with Neoplatonic views of discourse and interaction than the current assessment of Porphyry as a vicious attacker and critic of Iamblichus' theurgy. Thus, rather than viewing the debate as a hostile exchange between a sceptical Porphyry and an angry Iamblichus, I have suggested that this dialogue might have been deliberately constructed to produce a comprehensive account of theurgy and religious phenomena – primarily for educational, protreptic and initiatory purposes (for an intended audience of philosophers and other pagans) and secondarily, as a defence of theurgy and religious practice against Christian polemic and criticism. Furthermore, the form and structure of this mystagogic dialogue is connected with and reflects the content itself: since divination plays a key role in theurgy and since divination always involves dialogue, the dialogic structure involving question and answer is particularly suitable for such a discussion. Within this framework, the pseudonym of the Egyptian prophet 'Abammon' taken on by Iamblichus assumes great significance, since the dialogue reflects the interaction between prophet and client, as well as the interaction between philosophers: Iamblichus, as the Egyptian prophet Abammon, plays the part of the 'divine revealer' who expounds the divine mysteries of theurgy and religious practices to Porphyry. The interpretation of the exchange between Porphyry and Iamblichus offered here has significant implications for Porphyry's views of oracles, divination and theurgy: it is suggestive of a much more positive attitude towards these phenomena than has previously been recognised. An initial comparison of Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* and Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* with certain philosophical treatises from the *Hermetica* suggests that both have a structure based on a system of graded stages of education and initiation; this system in turn is based on the view that the initiate must cultivate the appropriate stages of receptivity in order to attain divine insight and assimilation. This interpretation

of Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo*, Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* and the *Hermetica* raises intriguing opportunities for further research, while simultaneously locating these works much more firmly within their contemporary religious, cultural and intellectual milieux.

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Chapter 5
Divination, Rationality and Ritual in Neoplatonism

What exactly is the relationship between divination, rationality and ritual in Neoplatonism? Until recently, Iamblichus and Proclus have often been viewed by scholars as 'superstitious' and 'irrational' for their enthusiastic endorsement and use of theurgy.[1] Although Neoplatonist scholarship has developed greatly from this earlier consensus, the orthodox view of a sharp opposition between the 'rationality' of Plotinus and Porphyry and the 'religious tendencies' of Iamblichus, Proclus and later Platonists still persists and is commonplace. Moreover, the terms and methodology used to construct such a view seem to have changed little.[2] This view invariably influences the way in which the roles of divination within Neoplatonism are assessed and evaluated. While this is a complex issue, I hope to offer some grounds for a re-evaluation of the views of Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus on divination and other religious phenomena. This chapter will examine the complex relationship between divination, rationality and ritual, and modern conceptions of 'rationality' and 'irrationality', in order to set in high relief the way in which such concepts have affected interpretations of the relationship between theurgy and philosophy, and the positions held by Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus on these matters. I will suggest that, while there is a certain difference in attitudes towards the importance of ritual among these philosophers, this represents a difference of emphasis rather than a rigid, dichotomous distinction between 'rational' and 'ritual' approaches to the divine and the salvation of the soul.

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[1] Cf. the classic evaluations of Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*: Dodds (1951), 287: 'a manifesto of irrationalism'; Des Places (1996), 12: 'a breviary of paganism in decline'

[2] Cf. for example, Clarke (2001), 119–121, who, within her generally erudite study of the *De Mysteriis*, characterises Iamblichus as an 'evangelist ... filled with fanatical enthusiasm', one who 'sells the supernatural to his readers', and denies that he is a rational philosopher (121), emphasising the miraculous and 'supernatural' aspects of theurgy. In doing so, she reinforces the modern dichotomy between rationalism and ritual, and its application to Plotinus and Porphyry (rationalist philosophers) and Iamblichus and Proclus (miraculous ritualists). Cf. Shaw (2003b), 492–493: 'By repeatedly likening the miraculous in theurgy to the miraculous in the Catholic Church and, more importantly, by opposing the supernatural to nature Clarke reinforces the rationalist paradigm she means to refute. If Iamblichus is not a rational philosopher must he be an "evangelist" ... We are no better off with an evangelical than with a rationalist caricature'. Cf. also Digeser (2009), 81–92.

In fact, the concepts of 'rationality' and 'ritual' as envisaged within Neoplatonism are much more subtle, nuanced and complex than their modern equivalents: they were perceived as mutually inclusive rather than mutually exclusive ways to truth and were often conceived as interlinked or connected on a kind of continuum. Viewed from this perspective, Neoplatonist attitudes towards divination can be evaluated with greater clarity and subtlety.

Theurgy versus Contemplation

Scholars have often contrasted the θεωρία ('philosophical contemplation') endorsed by Plotinus and Porphyry with the theurgy (θεουργία) of Iamblichus and Proclus.[3] Although Plotinus' mysticism is commonly recognised by scholars, it is sharply distinguished from and contrasted with theurgic ritual practices: in fact, many scholars deny *any* relationship between his transcendental mysticism and ritual practices.[4] As we have seen, many scholars have claimed that Plotinus' and Iamblichus' views on the nature of the soul affected their attitudes towards ritual: Plotinus had argued that the highest part of the human soul remained undescended and attached to Intellect (νοῦς) while Iamblichus thought the soul descended completely into the physical world and is entirely different from every kind of soul above it.[5] Thus, Plotinus thought that to re-establish contact with our higher self we need to turn to contemplation and philosophy, while Iamblichus considered that the help of the gods, actualised through theurgic ritual, was needed for the soul to ascend.[6] Porphyry is generally assumed to follow Plotinus on this issue. While Iamblichus is recognised as a philosopher, scholars argue that he prioritised theurgy over philosophy and explicitly disassociated himself from the more 'theoretical' views of Plotinus and Porphyry. Meanwhile, it is often claimed that Plotinus' mysticism and union with the One was obtained solely through 'rational' methods of pure contemplation which are frequently contrasted with the 'irrational' methods of ritualism advocated by his apparently

[3] For an example which typifies this attitude, cf. Rist (1964), 225: 'Trust in oracles had always been a vice of Porphyry's which he only managed to restrain while Plotinus was alive. His partial reversion to his old ways after Plotinus' death marks the beginning of a new trend towards irrationalism in the Neoplatonic school.' Rist's analysis is based on Bidez's view of Porphyry's intellectual development, now generally discounted as inadequate and largely unsubstantiated. Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 21–24.

[4] Cf. for example, Dodds (1951), 286; (1965), 86; Boyancé (1955), 189–209; Lloyd (1967), 287–293; Armstrong (1967), 260; Sheppard (1982), 212–224: 'It is still a common view that with [Iamblichus'] advocacy of theurgy a decline sets in and the rational basis of Plotinian mysticism is abandoned [in the Neoplatonic school]'; Smith (2004), 77.

[5] Cf. Chapter 4, pp. 147–150.

[6] Cf. Chapter 4, p. 147.

less philosophically sophisticated successors.[7] It seems important to examine both Plotinus and Porphyry's views on theurgy in order to see if such claims are justified.

Plotinus on Ritual: The Question of Magic and Theurgy

It has to be admitted immediately that Plotinus himself does not explicitly discuss theurgic rituals, nor does he mention the word θεουργία or any of its cognates in the *Enneads*.[8] Additionally he makes no certain reference to the *Chaldean Oracles*.[9] In his analysis of magical theory, Plotinus uses the words μαγεία and γοητεία to describe only antagonistic sorcery, malicious enchantment, binding spells and similar practices, but he does not refer to the more positive or soteriological uses of ritual power which the later Neoplatonists considered to comprise theurgic practice.[10] Similarly, the biographical tradition is limited in this regard, for Porphyry does not explicitly discuss Plotinus' attitude towards theurgy in his *Life of Plotinus*. He does mention Plotinus' refusal to accompany Amelius on a visit to temples on the feast of the New Moon; but also, immediately prior to this episode, he relates the anecdote about the evocation of Plotinus' guardian *daimon* at the Iseum of Rome, which Plotinus attends 'eagerly' (ἑτοίμως).[11] Yet Porphyry does not use the terms θεουργία, μαγεία or γοητεία to describe this ritual, but calls it a κλῆσις (a 'calling' or 'invocation'), an ambiguous term used to denote both theurgy and magical practices. Thus, as Mazur notes, 'the fact that Plotinus denies 'magic' (μαγεία) as a suitable means of ascent to the One is perhaps self-evident, but irrelevant, while the claim that he either did or did not approve of

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[7] Cf. Mazur (2004), 30–31, for a comprehensive summary. In this chapter, my analysis is indebted to his insights and research.

[8] Cf. Dodds (1951), 285, who notes that Plotinus was not described by his successors as a 'theurgist' (θεουργός). The history of the term 'theurgy' and its derivatives: Lewy (1956; repr.1978), 461–466.

[9] However, cf. Dillon (1992), 131, 140, who examines Plotinus' *Enneads* comparatively with the *Chaldean Oracles*, concluding that Plotinus had almost certainly heard of the *Oracles* and probably read them, deriving from them certain terms and phrases which he occasionally used as he thought appropriate, but did not use the *Oracles* in any truly significant manner.

[10] Plotinus, *Enn*. IV.4.30–44. Cf. also II.9.14.1-41. Merlan's argument (1953), 341–348, that Plotinus was a practising magician has been successfully refuted by Armstrong (1955), 73–79. However, this issue has no real bearing on Plotinus' attitude towards theurgy, given that all subsequent Neoplatonist philosophers who advocate the use of theurgy distinguish it stringently from γοητεία, a term used to designate 'magical' practices such as sorcery, particularly the use of antagonistic practices.

[11] Porphyry, *Plot.* 10. Cf. Mazur (2004), 31; Van den Berg (1999), 345–360, argues that this episode does not show a contempt for traditional religious practices on Plotinus' part.

theurgy itself can only be hypothetical and must be deduced from his statements on other topics.'[12] Despite this, many scholars have argued that Plotinus rejected *theurgy* as a means for mystical ascent.[13] The most influential arguments for this thesis have been those of A.H. Armstrong, who used Plotinus' own discussion of magic (a category which Armstrong does not clearly distinguish from theurgy) to show that the philosopher considered magical action to be confined solely to the cosmic sphere and therefore entirely ineffective for gaining contact with the intelligible realm or for attaining transcendent union with the One.[14] Armstrong bases his argument on Plotinus' point that magic (μαγεία, γοητεία) operates through the sympathy (συμπάθεια) of 'the All' (τὸ πᾶν), which specifically refers to the physical cosmos, conceived as a single, ensouled organism.[15] From this treatise, Armstrong concludes that Plotinus would have perceived magic as useless for conjunction with the ontological level of *Nous* and certainly with the transcendent One, since these entities are located in the hypercosmic realm (above the physical cosmos) and are consequently outside the domain of magic.[16]

Yet Armstrong's argument is problematic: the major problem is that he conflates magic with theurgy and consequently misapplies Plotinus' explicit arguments against magic to theurgy.[17] This point is reinforced by Plotinus' discussion of the moral status of magician as irrelevant to the effective operation of the magical procedure, which works through the sympathy inherent in the 'All': this is often taken as an indication of Plotinus' condemnation of ritual *per se*; yet we have seen that for Iamblichus, virtue and moral excellence are absolute prerequisites for theurgy.[18] This suggests that Plotinus' condemnation of μαγεία and γοητεία cannot legitimately be applied to theurgy. Furthermore, Plotinus considers magic to operate through cosmic sympathy; thus, it seems clear that hypercosmic powers

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[12] As noted by Mazur (2004), 31.

[13] Dodds (1951), 285–287; Armstrong (1955), 73–79.

[14] Armstong (1955), 73–79 *contra* Merlan (1953), 341–348. Cf. Smith (1974), 124.

[15] Plotinus, *Enn*. IV.4.40.1–26; IV.4.41.1–16; IV.4.42.11–14; Armstrong (1955), 77. Cf. Mazur (2004), 32–33, for an extensive discussion of Plotinus' treatise and Armstrong's arguments regarding the philosopher's position on magic and theurgy.

[16] Armstrong (1955), 76–78. Cf. Mazur (2004), 32–33.

[17] Mazur (2004), 33–35.

[18] Cf. Plotinus, *Enn*. IV.4.42.11–19; IV.4.41.10–16; Smith (1974), 124. Iamblichus makes a similar statement about those ritual practitioners who use the sympathy within the physical universe for wicked ends at *DM* 4.10 (193.10–194.6): he explicitly disassociates this type of ritual practice from the activities of the theurgists, who operate with virtue and a desire to manifest the goodness of the gods (for the latter point, see *DM* 10.1–2; 10.4–5). Iamblichus' insistence that virtue and moral excellence are absolute prerequisites for theurgy: Chapter 1, pp. 26–28.

are immune to magical actions.[19] Yet the theoretical basis and operation of theurgy works according to a different model, according to the later Neoplatonists. We have seen that for Iamblichus, theurgy does not merely work through sympathy (συμπάθεια) on a 'horizontal' level; rather, theurgy works by invoking the gods through their symbols (σύμβολα) on a 'vertical' axis which connects the symbols to their divine causes, through the continuous emanation of divine energy from the gods down through their respective chains of symbols (σύμβολα).[20] Iamblichus explains this 'vertical' operation of theurgy with reference to 'divine love' (θεία φιλία), the transcendent principle which allows sympathy (συμπάθεια) to arise.[21] This 'vertical' model is largely consistent with Plotinus' metaphysics, but is distinct from his theory of antagonistic magic, which relies only upon 'horizontal' chains of causality within the physical cosmos.[22] Lest one should think that this explanation of the vertical operation of theurgy (through divine love) is an Iamblichean innovation that postdates Plotinus, the *Chaldean Oracles* also imply the vertical operation of theurgy through their frequent allusions to the soteriological aims of theurgy, including the reversion of the soul to the divine and the One, and to divine love.[23] Thus, Plotinus' treatise criticises antagonistic magic but does not implicate theurgy in its condemnation of such practices.[24] Despite this, Armstrong claims that Plotinus restricts the efficacy of all *ritual* action to the physical cosmos; yet a careful examination of Plotinus' account of magic suggests that this is not the case.[25] The explicit aim of Plotinus' argument is to free the celestial gods from deliberate participation in harmful magic.[26] In a related treatise (IV.3), there is evidence that Plotinus considered that divine energies could be ritually adduced: here, he explicitly refers (in a positive manner) to what would elsewhere be called theurgy in the context of a discussion of the encosmic activity of the soul:

> Καί μοι δοκοῦσιν οἱ πάλαι σοφοί, ὅσοι ἐβουλήθησαν θεοὺς αὐτοῖς παρεῖναι ἱερὰ καὶ ἀγάλματα ποιησάμενοι, εἰς τὴν τοῦ παντὸς φύσιν ἀπιδόντες, ἐν νῷ λαβεῖν ὡς πανταχοῦ μὲν εὐάγωγον

[19] Plotinus, *Enn*. IV.4.40.1–4; IV.4.40.18–26; IV.4.41.7–16; IV.4.42.11–18; Mazur (2004), 33.

[20] Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 28–30; 39–40.

[21] Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 28–30; Iamblichus, *DM* 1.14 (44.11–45.6); 1.21 (65.5–11); 4.3 (184.14–185.8); 5.9 (209.9–11)

[22] As noted by Mazur (2004), 34.

[23] The ascent of the soul: *Chald. Or.* F110; F97; F115; F121; possibly F111; F116; F122; F138. Eros (divine love): F39; F42; F44 (the Father has filled souls with this love); F43.

[24] Cf. Mazur (2004), 34, argues that Plotinus does not explicitly oppose theurgy and magic in this treatise because his immediate argument is not concerned with soteriology.

[25] Armstrong (1955), 77; Mazur (2004), 34.

[26] Plotinus, *Enn*. IV.4.42. Cf. Mazur (2004), 34.

> ψυχῆς φύσις, δέξασθαί γε μὴν ῥᾷστον ἂν εἴη ἁπάντων, εἴ τις προσπαθές τι τεκτήναιτο ὑποδέξασθαι δυνάμενον μοῖράν τινα αὐτῆς. προσπαθὲς δὲ τὸ ὁπωσοῦν μιμηθέν, ὥσπερ κάτοπτρον ἁρπάσαι εἶδός τι δυνάμενον.
>
> And I think that the wise men of old, who made temples and statues in the wish that the gods should be present to them, looking to the nature of the All, had in mind that the nature of soul is everywhere easy to attract, but that if someone were able to construct something receptive to it and able to receive a part of it, it would of all things receive soul most easily. That which is receptive to it is what imitates it in some way, like a mirror able to catch [the reflection of] a form.[27]

In a general sense, Plotinus exhibits a positive attitude towards religious practices here which may throw some light on the episode where he refused to accompany Amelius to the temples: there is nothing wrong with building temples and so it can be assumed that there is also nothing wrong with visiting them as Amelius did.[28] The practice which Plotinus describes here is τελεστική, the consecration or 'animation' of statues for the purpose of receiving oracles from the gods: this was a well-attested element of theurgic ritual where it was used as an aid to attaining soteriological goals, as well as of Egyptian religious tradition.[29] As Mazur has noted, 'Plotinus' image of the attraction of the soul through likeness resembles the general theory of theurgy expounded by his successors according to which symbols (σύμβολα) "vertically" draw down divine energy into the practitioner's soul and thereby permit a union with the gods'.[30] Several scholars have tried to explain Plotinus' apparent concession to ritual praxis in this passage by claiming that Plotinus only intends it as an example of the more general phenomenon of the participation of soul in all material things suited to receive it, without giving any special privilege to ritual objects.[31] Yet even if this is the case, the view that all objects naturally participate in the divine is nevertheless consistent with Iamblichus' theory of theurgy, in which all objects could be considered as symbols (σύμβολα) of the gods, although certain objects (those with a greater degree of likeness and assimilation to the superior entities) are seen as

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[27] Plotinus, *Enn*. IV.3.11.1–7, trs. Armstrong (1984), following the emendations of Mazur (2004), 35, who notes that Armstrong renders the term προσπαθές consistently as 'sympathetic', which may be misleading in this context: Plotinus may have deliberately avoided the use of the term συμπάθεια here.

[28] Cf. Van den Berg (1999), 355, for this line of argument integrated into a wider reassessment of Plotinus' attitude towards traditional religious practices.

[29] Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 26; 31–32 and n. 171; Chapter 7, pp. 252–255, section entitled: 'Divination by Statues'.

[30] Mazur (2004), 35. Cf. also Plotinus, *Enn*. VI.7.22.

[31] Dodds (1951), 293, 306, n. 83; Smith (1974), 127, n. 8.

more receptive than others to divine energies.[32] It could be argued that Plotinus means that the psychic influence drawn down into terrestrial likenesses is merely cosmic, but in the subsequent passage he makes it very clear that objects within the physical cosmos are connected not only with each other but also with the intelligible gods, by means of the Soul.[33] Thus, whether Plotinus intended this passage as an explicit endorsement of theurgic ritual or merely as an argument for the immanence of divine energy in any appropriate physical object, it appears to subvert Armstrong's claim that for Plotinus, ritual cannot reach beyond the physical, cosmic realm into the hypercosmic, divine realms, and, in a broader sense, it undermines the claim that Plotinus would have rejected soteriological, theurgic ritual.

It is also important to examine Plotinus' treatise *Against the Gnostics*, which makes certain criticisms of magical praxis that have been cited as evidence of his apparently rationalistic rejection of theurgy.[34] Plotinus attacks the Gnostics' attempts at magical interactions with the gods, criticising their attempts to coerce the gods or heavenly powers through magical invocations and their notion that incorporeal deities can be affected by physical sounds.[35] It could be thought that Plotinus means to condemn all ritual contact with the gods, including theurgy, with these criticisms. Yet upon closer examination, it becomes clear that Plotinus does not attack the Gnostics for their use of ritual in and of itself. Rather, he attacks *the ways in which they use ritual*, for their methods betray an arrogant and impious approach towards (and are based on faulty notions of) the divine, a line of criticism which the philosopher repeatedly raises against the Gnostics throughout the treatise.[36] The first element of Plotinus' criticism is that the Gnostics consider that human beings can compel the gods to do their bidding as though they were superior to the gods. Aside from the fact that the notion that magicians compel or coerce the gods was commonplace by Plotinus' time and served almost as a

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[32] Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 5.23 (233.9–13); 3.17 (141.11–142.3); Mazur (2004), 36.

[33] Plotinus, *Enn.* IV.3.11.8–13; Mazur (2004), 36.

[34] Cf. for example Pearson (1992), 253–276.

[35] Plotinus, *Enn*. II.9.14.1–11.

[36] Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* II.9.5.1–16 (Plotinus attacks the Gnostics for their arrogant claim that their souls share in divinity while the sun and the heavens do not share in divinity); II.9.8.9–17 (the Gnostics' arrogant and impious disparagment of the nature and management of the 'All', the cosmos, and their rejection of the notion that it is a clear and noble image of the intelligible gods); II.9.9.44–53 (the Gnostics arrogantly set themselves next to the supreme God and despise the intelligible gods and the other orders of gods, whereas the man of real dignity must ascend to the gods in due measure and 'with an absence of boorish arrogance'); II.9.10.11–13 (the Gnostics do not bring forward proofs or demonstrations for their views, but rather make arrogant, arbitrary assertions; cf. also II.9.6.1-28; II.9.14.37-46); II.9.13.1–7 (the Gnostics misunderstand the orderly progression and metaphysical order of the cosmos, and so they censure it).

definition of 'magic' (γοητεία), it is important to note that Iamblichus explicitly and repeatedly disassociates theurgy from such coercive ritual attempts to approach the gods.[37] Given that Plotinus' criticism exhibits a condemnation of the notions upon which such magical 'coercive' attempts are based, Mazur argues that Plotinus' real problem with the Gnostics is a differential view of the ontological hierarchy.[38] The Gnostics (at least according to Plotinus' interpretation) believed that the celestial powers are obstacles to salvation and must be dominated with hostile magic. In Plotinus' system, on the contrary, this is neither necessary nor possible: for Plotinus' metaphysics is governed by a tacit axiom, termed 'the axiom of continuous hierarchy' by Mazur, 'which entails that an ontologically-inferior principle can never control an ontologically-superior one and, concomitantly, that no ethically-inferior entity could end up in a position of dominance over an ethically-superior one.'[39] This axiom is based on a correspondence between ethical and ontological status. Thus, because the celestial entities are entirely impassible (according to Plotinus) and are superior to humans in the cosmological and ontological hierarchy, they are morally superior to humans and incapable of being affected by human agency.[40] Consequently, Plotinus does not criticise the Gnostics for their use of ritual *per se*, but for their arrogance, impiety and futile attempts to manipulate their superiors.[41] Clearly this practice bears no theoretical relationship to the model of theurgy described by Iamblichus and later Neoplatonists, who stringently deny that theurgic praxis seeks to constrain the gods. In fact, a similar 'axiom of continuous hierarchy' is implicitly assumed in Iamblichus' metaphysics, along with a concomitant correlation between ethical and ontological status, and it is on this basis that Iamblichus also criticises inappropriate ritual approaches to the divine (including 'magical' practices described under the rubric of γοητεία), which he stringently distinguishes from theurgy, because the latter seeks alignment

[37] Cf. Chapter 6, p. 224; Chapter 3, p. 115. Iamblichus, *DM* 1.11 (37.6–11; 38.1–10); 1.12 (40.12–41.8; 42.5–13); 3.17 (139.10–141.10); 3.18 (145.4–13); 4.1 (181.2–5); 4.2; 4.3 (184.11–185.8); Addey (2011a), 279–294; (2012), 133–150.

[38] Mazur (2004), 37; (2005), 95–114. Cf. Berchman (1991), 207, n. 13: 'Plotinus rejects magic, not because he denies the existence of ritual. He abjures magic because it does not fit his own definition of rationality.'

[39] Cf. Mazur (2004), 37; (2005), 95–114. Although this axiom is not explicitly stated by Plotinus, it is certainly implicit in his comments at *Enn*. II.9.13.25–34 and in his criticism that the Gnostics are ignorant of the regular order of the ontological hierarchy (*Enn*. II.9.13.1–8). This axiom was later formalised by Proclus (*ET* propositions 7; 8; 10; 24; 36–38; 108), demonstrating that even those philosophers who utilised theurgy would have disagreed with the Gnostics' view of the ontological hierarchy.

[40] Cf. Plotinus, *Enn*. II.9.14.1–2; 9–11; 43–46; Mazur (2004), 37–38.

[41] Cf. p. 177, n. 36 above for Plotinus' criticism of the arrogance and impiety of the Gnostics; Mazur (2004), 38.

with and assimilation to the divine through pious and humble cultivation of receptivity.[42]

Given that Plotinus' criticisms of 'magic' (μαγεία and γοητεία) are never directed explicitly against theurgy and do not seem to be applicable to theurgy *per se*, it seems important to examine the apparent differences between theurgy and Plotinian contemplation in more detail. Both have the same ultimate goal: divine ascent and mystical union with the One. Despite this, the orthodox scholarly interpretation is that theurgy and Plotinian contemplation are mutually exclusive, non-convergent paths.[43] However, the semantic ambiguities of the term θεωρία (contemplation) have been noted: Plotinian θεωρία cannot simply be equated with philosophical or mental 'concentration', as is often suggested.[44] Indeed, as Mazur notes, 'it is generally recognised that Plotinus rejected ordinary intellection at the final stages of ascent and sought union with the One through non-discursive techniques.'[45] It is often suggested that a Plotinian union with the One cannot be brought about 'automatically', unlike the *ex opere operatio* rituals of the theurgists, but rather must be awaited passively.[46] In this sense, 'the presumed passivity of contemplation, appropriate to a "genuine" philosopher or mystic, is opposed to the activity of the rituals used by magicians and "less-spiritual" religious practitioners'.[47] However, this rigid opposition also seems to dissolve under close examination. On the one hand, while Plotinus certainly claimed that the ultimate moment of union

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[42] On the convergence of power and value and the correlation between ethical and ontological status in Iamblichus' system: cf. Chapter 7, pp. 270–273. For the use of an implicit 'axiom of continuous hierarchy' to disparage hasty, impious and faulty ritual approaches to the divine, see Iamblichus, *DM* 3.13 (129.15–132.2), which contrasts the deceitful, hasty, ephemeral and impious methods of the magician with the pure methods of the theurgist; the works of the theurgist are inaccessible to and unobstructed by evil spirits because of the ethical and ontological superiority of theurgic works); 3.31 (176.3–178.14) (see also Chapter 1, pp. 35–36). Cf. also *Chald. Or.* F136, and Proclus' commentary, which discuss inappropriate approaches to the divine.

[43] Dodds (1951), 285–286; Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 462–463; Cremer (1969).

[44] The semantic ambiguities implicit in the terms θεωρία (contemplation) and θεουργία (theurgy): Mazur (2004), 39–41; Chlup (2012), 174.

[45] Mazur (2004), 40. On the specificially non-discursive aspect of Plotinian contemplation (θεωρία): Deck (1967), appendix 2. The non-discursiveness of the intelligible world according to Plotinus: *Enn*. V.8.6.1–9. Cf. also Chlup (2012), 174. Even those scholars who recognise some kind of convergence between Plotinian contemplation and the so-called 'higher theurgy' (discussed further below) tend to see the contours of the former as self-evident and clear, and they tend to still differentiate these paths to union with the One in some sense: Rosán (1949), 211, n. 152, is typical in this regard.

[46] Cf. for example, Rist (1964), 213–215; Armstrong (1967), 259–260. This contrast seems to underlie Dillon's conclusions about Iamblichean theurgy: (2007), 40 although his earlier, positive comments (35–38) are also relevant here.

[47] Mazur (2004), 40, n. 43.

was a matter of utter receptivity, he repeatedly describes the penultimate phases of the hyper-noetic approach as a deliberate, interiorised, praxis.[48] On the other hand, Iamblichus repeatedly insists that theurgic acts do not imply control of the gods but instead conform to divine will: it is the gods who primarily do the work of theurgic ritual, by unstintingly shedding their light on theurgists.[49] Therefore, after preparing the receptivity of his soul through intellectual, moral and ritual discipline and attention, including utilising the appropriate symbols (σύμβολα), the theurgist also has to wait 'passively' for the gods to come.[50] The structural features and characteristics of Plotinian contemplation and union with the One will be further compared with theurgy below. For now, it is important to note that the chief, remaining difference between theurgy and Plotinian contemplation seems to be the use of external ritual objects as opposed to internal contemplation.

Porphyry on Theurgy

We have already seen that Porphyry had a positive attitude towards religious practices and traditions, yet the exact nature of Porphyry's views on theurgy are difficult to ascertain, particularly with regard to the soteriological role of theurgy as a means of mystical ascent.[51] The problem is exacerbated by the fact that many of Porphyry's works do not survive and consequently many of his views remain unclear. In this regard, scholars have been very much influenced by Augustine's statements that Porphyry thought that theurgy was useful for the purification of the lower soul, but had no effect on the superior, 'intellectual' soul, which could return to the divine without theurgical assistance.[52] In Chapter 4, however, we have seen that Augustine clearly conflates theurgy and magic (γοητεία) in order to discredit the former, along almost identical lines to Eusebius. Thus, it is possible that Augustine misrepresents or distorts Porphyrian views on theurgy to a certain extent in order to further undermine Porphyry's reputation and authority. This misrepresentation is implied by other elements of Augustine's portrayal of Porphyrian views of theurgy, including the use of Chaldean terminology, the ascription of etherial elevation to the theurgists and the endorsement of the idea that theurgists receive oracles from the gods, all of which suggest a greater valuation of theurgy on

[48] Plotinus, *Enn*. V.5.8.3–22; V.8.11.1–19; VI.7.36.10–26; VI.9.7.1–22; VI.9.9.50–60; VI.9.10.9–21; VI.9.11.10–25; Smith (1974), 101; Mazur (2004), 40, n. 43.

[49] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.12 (41.3–8); cf. also 1.12 (40.14–41.2; 42.5–7); 1.14 (44.8–11); 1.15 (49.3–5); 3.18 (145.4–8; 145.10–13); 1.11 (37.13–16; 38.7–10); 5.23 (232.5–7); Shaw (1995), 85–86; (1998), 256; Dillon (2007), 34–35; Addey (2012), 133–150.

[50] Iamblichus, *DM* 2.11 (96.13–97.2; 97.4–15); 1.12 (40.14–41.7).

[51] Cf. Chapter 4, pp. 136–138; 150–157.

[52] Cf. Chapter 4, p. 153, for full citation.

Porphyry's part than that ostensibly claimed by Augustine.[53] In Chapter 3, I have attempted to demonstrate the possible theurgic basis and ideas which underlie Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*. The theurgic nature of this work is further supported by the connections drawn by Porphyry between receiving oracles and initiation (Chapter 2). Furthermore, the biographical tradition suggests Porphyry's positive involvement with theurgic ritual: Eunapius states of Porphyry, 'As for natural philosophy and theurgy, let that be left to sacred rites and mysteries' (τὸ δὲ φυσικὸν καὶ θεουργὸν τελεταῖς ἀφείσθω καὶ μυστηρίοις), assuming the standard pose of the initiate's silence but simultaneously revealing implicitly a high valuation of Porphyry's expertise in theurgy, even given the hagiographic nature of his work.[54] This assessment surely indicates the manner in which Eunapius' comment (made only seventeen lines earlier) that Porphyry expelled some kind of *daimon* (which the locals called Kausatha) from a baths complex should be interpreted.[55] As we have seen, both Porphyry and Iamblichus thought that 'magic' or 'sorcery' (γοητεία) attracted evil *daimones* (rather than expelling them) whereas wise men are protected from such *daimones* through their assimilation to the divine.[56] Iamblichus also claims that evil *daimones* retreat from and are dispelled by the theurgist, who is protected by their contact with the gods.[57] Given that Eunapius was a pupil of Chrysanthius, a successor of Iamblichus, it is almost certain that Eunapius refers to Porphyry's participation in a theurgic ritual here. Thus, it seems probable that Porphyry had a more favourable attitude towards theurgy than has commonly been acknowledged, although his position is somewhat ambiguous given the lack of direct evidence.

Theurgy versus Contemplation: Part 2

Thus having examined Plotinus' and Porphyry's views on theurgy, there are some grounds at least to question the sharp opposition perceived by scholars between the 'rational' contemplation (θεωρία) endorsed by Plotinus and Porphyry and the theurgic practices of Iamblichus and later Neoplatonists. As we have seen, this opposition is often justified with reference to a famous quotation from Damascius, who states that Iamblichus and Proclus valued the hieratic art over philosophy, while Plotinus and Porphyry preferred philosophy.[58] Aside from the fact that Damascius was writing two or three centuries after the time of Plotinus,

[53] Cf. Chapter 4, pp. 155–157.

[54] Eunapius, *VS* 457. Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 15–16.

[55] Eunapius, *VS* 457.11. Cf. also 461 (p. 378).

[56] Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 35–36; Porphyry, *Abst*. 2.41.5; 2.42.1; 2.45.1–3.

[57] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.31 (176.6–8; 178.3–13).

[58] Cf. Chapter 4, p. 130; Damascius, *Commentary on Plato's Phaedo* II, I.172.1–3, ed. and trs. Westerink (1977).

Porphyry and Iamblichus, the interpretation of the quotation is debatable given its context: Damascius does not write as if 'philosophy' and 'hieratic practices' are in any way mutually exclusive but rather points to a difference of emphasis between the two sets of philosophers, confirmed by the concluding line which states that Plato combined the two into a single truth by calling the philosopher 'a Bacchus'.[59] This suggests a view of philosophy and theurgy as elements on a continuum.[60] Furthermore, even though Damascius seems to have considered the ideal to be a fusion of philosophy and theurgy, he may have named Plotinus and Porphyry in order to add greater authority to his own (apparent) opinion – that philosophy, which attains the original cause, trumps theurgy, which though important, reaches only so far as the level of generation.[61] If indeed this was Damascius' attitude towards theurgy (a controversial issue in itself), it bears a marked similarity to the view of theurgy attributed to Porphyry by Augustine. However, Damascius' attitude towards theurgy is somewhat ambiguous: in *Philosophical History* Fragment 85, he comments on the talents of Asclepiodotus, stating that the latter was lacking in higher wisdom, 'the Orphic and Chaldean lore which transcends philosophical common sense'.[62] The phrase 'Chaldean lore' evidently refers to theurgy and the context suggests that theurgy is valued and placed above philosophy, although the fragmentary nature of the evidence makes Damascius' stance difficult to ascertain.[63] If Damascius' attitude towards theurgy was ambiguous or if he placed philosophy above theurgy, this also undermines any interpretation of Damascius' characterisation of the tradition as a rigid, clear-cut, chronological distinction between those philosophers who prefer philosophy and those who prefer theurgy; rather, it points towards varying attitudes in the Neoplatonic tradition towards theurgy, partially dependent on

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[59] Cf. Chapter 4, pp. 130–131; Athanassiadi (1993), 129; Schibli (2002), 108; Mazur (2004), 38–39.

[60] In her introduction to the *Philosophical History* (1999, 56), Athanassiadi states: 'Damascius preferred the philosophical to the theurgic, as he often declared, *yet he knew that the ideal resided in their fusion*' [my emphasis]. Schibli (2002), 109, states: 'In short, Neoplatonists who believed in theurgy, including Damascius himself, saw no real discrepancy between it and philosophy; instead they combined both in a coherent world-view that manifested itself in thought as well as performance and that reflected the actual perfection, cohesion and unity of the cosmos.'

[61] Damascius, *Philosophical History* F4A; F88; F150. Cf. Mazur (2004), 38–39.

[62] Damasicus, *Philosophical History* F85.

[63] Westerink (1977), 104, n. 6, attributes this view to Damascius, commenting on II.I.172.1–3: 'Damascius, in spite of his attempt at impartiality, evidently prefers the "hieratic" school', and he points to *Commentaries on Plato's Phaedo* II.I.168.13–14, where Damascius, in the context of a discussion of initiatory rites, states: 'The ways by which philosophy leads us upwards can be thought of in analogous terms, though the communion achieved through them is not perfect nor equal to the mystic union.'.

each philosopher's individual preferences and areas of interest. This picture seems to be confirmed by Eunapius' work, which describes the diverse attitudes towards theurgy of Iamblichus' followers, such as Aedesius, Sopater, Eustathius, Sosipatra, and their own pupils and children, including Antoninus, Maximus of Ephesus, Chyrysanthius and Priscus; such varying attitudes are especially exemplified in Eunapius' account of Julian's education by Chrysanthius (an advocate of theurgy) and Eusebius of Myndus (who was sceptical and somewhat dismissive of theurgy).[64] The extant fragments of Damasicus' *Philosophical History* present a similar picture, such as the different stances towards theurgy adopted by Isidore, Proclus, Hierocles, Heraiscus, Asclepiades and Asclepiodotus.[65] This evidence suggests a more varied spectrum of attitudes towards theurgy within the tradition than the (apparently rigid) chronological distinction drawn by Damascius above. Moreover, given Damascius' own ambiguity towards theurgy, caution should be exercised in interpreting this statement as a definitive distinction between the two sets of philosophers.

As Mazur has noticed, ancient testimonia such as Damascius' comment and Augustine's claims about Porphyrian views of theurgy, 'have frequently given scholars the impression that the Neoplatonists already imagined a fundamental contrast between theurgy and "real" philosophy, a contrast often anachronistically mapped onto the modern antinomy between rationality and ritual'.[66] It remains to examine the ancient conception of the relationship between theurgy and philosophy, focusing on whether these phenomena were indeed distinguished by Neoplatonist philosophers in terms of rationality and ritual. Firstly, it is vital to examine the modern opposition often constructed between thought and action, and consequently between rationality and ritual, and to focus on the relation of concepts such as 'rationality' and 'irrationality' to ritual theory and praxis.

Modern Views on Rationality and Ritual

Historians of philosophy have generally conceptualised the relationship between philosophical rationality and religious ritual according to a Cartesian dichotomy between thought and action. Thus, rational philosophical cognition is held to be the absolute antithesis of religious ritual.[67] This dichotomy is based on a particular notion of 'rationality', yet there are problems inherent in notions

[64] Eunapius, *VS* 474–475. While I have described these varying attitudes as dependent on individual preferences, it seems probable that theurgists themselves would have explained such differences according to the varying degrees of receptivity of the particular individual, as well as with recourse to the (mysterious) will of the gods.

[65] Damasicus, *Philosophical History* F9; F34; F45; F59; F71; F72; F85; F86.

[66] Mazur (2004), 39. Augustine on Porphyry's view of theurgy: see Chapter 4, pp. 152–157.

[67] Mazur (2004), 42–43.

of 'rationality' from both philosophical and anthropological perspectives.[68] Berchman has demonstrated that scholars of Neoplatonism have generally relied on a hypothetico-deductive model of rationality, with a notion of correspondence rules which specify the procedure for applying theoretical terms to observed happenings.[69] According to this model, philosophical and scientific knowledge are marked off from religious thought: unobservable entities and mystical notions are excluded; religious notions and rituals are judged to be nonsense because they are beyond empirical verification or falsification.[70] Yet this model has been completely dismantled by contemporary philosophers of science on the basis of its concept of 'correspondence rules', which relate invariant observational statements to unobservable entities in theoretical statements. The very validity or coherence of correspondence rules marked the demise of the deductive model of science.[71] As Berchman notes, this is significant for it requires us seriously to question traditional approaches to rationality and ritual in Neoplatonism and it requires an exploration of alternative models of 'rationality'.[72] Symbolic and rationalist attempts to define rationality argue that it is a means/ends decision-making process, which is instrumental.[73] For a belief or action to be rational it is required that there be good reasons, or a requirement of adequate evidential support for them. According to this model, rationality 'involves pursuing ends that are coherent, and employing means that are appropriate to those ends'.[74] In other words, a person is considered rational when: (1) he or she pursues ends that are mutually coherent and (2) he or she employs means that are appropriate to the ends pursued: 'the critical appraisal implied by the attribution of rationality is judged in light of the agent's belief, the action he decided upon constitutes a reasonable or appropriate choice

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[68] Cf. Mazur (2004), 42, n. 50; Penner (1989), 11–24; Berchman (1991), 184–216.

[69] Berchman (1991), 184; Suppe (1977), 17, defines this hypothetico-deductive model of rationality as follows: 'According to this account, scientific theories, the foundation and success of modern knowledge, are based on a distinction between theoretical terms ["entities" or "forces"] and observational terms ["observed happenings"]. Correspondence rules [operational definitions, rules of interpretation] define the theoretical terms, guarantee the cognitive significance of theoretical terms, and specify the procedure for applying the theory to what is observed.'

[70] Berchman (1991), 184, notes that the model of rationality utilised by E.R. Dodds is implicitly logical positivist. This model has been critiqued by Carnap, Hempel, Nagel and Braithwaite.

[71] Cf. Penner (1986), 646–671; Berchman (1991), 184–185.

[72] Berchman (1991), 185.

[73] This definition received its classical sociological analysis in the works of Max Weber. For more recent definitions, cf. Lukes (1977), 54; Berchman (1991), 185.

[74] Berchman (1991), 185.

of means for achieving his end'.[75] Thus, to judge the rationality of a decision, the information available to the decision-maker must be considered, along with his or her reasons for believing it to be true, and its suitability, judged by the information, for achieving its specified objective. According to this model, rationality can be defined as an instrumental means/end calculation. The criteria of rationality are provided by the individual who culls them from his or her cultural system.[76] This definition of rationality allows Neoplatonic ritual into the domain of rationality.[77] For within its cultural context, Neoplatonic ritual is an element within a wider rational system.[78] Its means are appropriate and its ends are coherent because for later Neoplatonists ritual is considered among the best ways of accomplishing a series of intended objectives, such as the ascent of the soul and communion with the divine.[79] In a detailed analysis of Neoplatonic notions of theurgy, Berchman demonstrates that in this context ritual is 'rational': (1) ritual is efficacious in terms of means because there is adequate epistemological evidence to suggest that theurgy is suitable for achieving its specified objective – entrance into the intelligible world and communion with the gods; (2) ritual is undertaken for certain reasons. It can

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[75] Hempel (1965), 463–465. Cf. Berchman (1991), 185, who comments on this model of rationality: 'This means that if we are to choose a rational course of action in pursuit of given ends, we have to take into account all available information concerning such matters as the particular circumstances in which action is to be taken; the different means by which, in these circumstances, the given ends might be attained; and the effects that may be expected from the use of the different available means in pursuit of ends.'

[76] Cf. Berchman (1991), 185.

[77] Following Penner (1989), 20–24; Berchman (1991), 184–216, especially 185–186.

[78] Cf. Berchman (1991), 185. This model of rationality may serve as a useful methodological tool for the analysis of ritual practices and the use of divination in diverse cultures. For example, in his study of the phenomena of oracles and witchcraft among the Azande people, Evans-Pritchard (1937; rev. 1976) emphasises the logical nature of Zande beliefs about oracles and witchcraft within their cultural context and concludes that: 'I hope that I have persuaded the reader of one thing, namely, the intellectual consistency of Zande notions ... When we see how an individual uses them we may say that they are mystical but we cannot say that his use of them is illogical or even that it is uncritical' (222). Furthermore, when Evans-Pritchard examines Zande notions of cause and effect (21–30) and the place of witchcraft within them, he finds a framework which relies on a plurality of simultaneous causes (cf. Chapter 7, pp. 240; 243–250, for Iamblichus' framework of multiple yet simultaneous causation): 'Zande belief in witchcraft in no way contradicts empirical knowledge of cause and effect. The world known to the senses is just as real to them as it is to us. We must not be deceived by their way of expressing causation and imagine that because they say a man was killed by witchcraft they entirely neglect the secondary causes that, as we judge them, were the true causes of his death' (25). Although some aspects of Evans-Pritchard's study are considered outdated (particularly his fieldwork and ethnographic techniques), the work is still held to be an anthropological classic.

[79] Cf. Berchman (1991), 187.

be explained as a means to an end: the salvation of the soul; and (3) ritual can be rationally explained and justified from within a massive network of philosophical principles and postulates.[80]

Meanwhile, scholars of religion and anthropologists also 'typically rely on a narrow and conceptually impoverished definition of ritual, limited to the repeated performance of physical actions involving material objects and bodies.'[81] Since ritual is typically interpreted according to this conventional dichotomy between thought and action (or even according to the duality of mind and body), it is conceived 'as the physical complement of a corresponding cognitive system (i.e. a belief or myth), but not as a cognitive process itself.'[82] Recently, however, scholars of religion, anthropologists and postcolonial theorists have challenged this simplistic understanding of ritual. The postcolonial theorist Talal Asad has offered a compelling critique of the modern scholarly understanding of ritual as based on post-Enlightenment constructions of agency and subjectivity: he argues that rituals are seen as outward representations which are viewed as either guises or as symptoms of human needs; yet such views are based on a Western, individualised model of subjectivity which locates religiosity in the mind (an individual's beliefs or thoughts) rather than understanding rituals as practices that are part of a lifelong endeavour of moral development and a 'constituting' activity in the world.[83] Catherine Bell has also found the category of 'ritual', as currently formulated by scholars, to be problematic: she argues that it is dependent upon thought–action/mind–body dichotomies, which tend to reinforce and elevate the status of scholar as thinking subject and devalue the status of the ritual participants as possessing less agency (that is, moulded, controlled, doing-without-reflecting): 'there is a logic of sorts to most theoretical discourse on ritual and this discourse is fundamentally

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[80] Cf. Berchman (1991), 184–216, for a full examination of these arguments which comprise evidence of the close relationship between rationality and ritual in Neoplatonism, through an exploration of the epistemological, metaphysical and psychological postulates underlying the theory of theurgy.

[81] Mazur (2004), 42. Cf. Bussanich (2005), 483: 'It seems to me doubtful that the social and collective function of ritual, as it is generally understood by historians and anthropologists, really fits Iamblichus or any of the later Neoplatonists.' For an example of such a view of ritual in Greek religion cf. Burkert (1985), 54–55.

[82] Mazur (2004), 42-43. Cf. also the remarks of Bell (1992), 19; 47–48; Smith (2002), 73–91. On the origins of modern attitudes towards ritual in Protestant anti-Catholic polemic, see Smith (1990). As Mazur (2004), 43, n. 51, notes, 'Even scholars hyper-conscious of the theoretical problems with the categories 'magic' and 'mysticism' – such as Janowitz (2002) – tend to leave the scholarly category of 'ritual' itself unquestioned and treat its boundaries as self-evident.' Cf. Janowitz (2002), xi–xxv; 1–18.

[83] Asad (1993), 79. Cf. also Keller (2002), 56–59; 64–65; Rangos (2000), 78–79.

organised by an underlying opposition between thought and action'.[84] Mazur has examined this dichotomy in relation to Plotinus' contemplation:

> According to this division no purely mental 'act' can be 'ritual,' which also means that the deliberate discipline of subjective consciousness, as in guided meditation, is similarly excluded from the category of ritual even if ... it significantly retains the formal structure of the more external rituals from which it was originally derived.[85]

The arbitrary nature of this dichotomy between thought and action becomes clear from even a brief examination of numerous religious examples from other traditional contexts, such as Kabbalah, Sufism and Tantra, in which ritual actions or utterances are progressively interiorised until they are iterated through thought or imagination alone.[86] Mazur argues that the rigid division between thought and action is particularly misleading when attempting to understand Plotinus' contemplation, the final phase of which is a prescribed technique of meditation or visualisation which may well be closely modelled on ritual patterns, although it also corresponds with his metaphysical system: 'our categorical division between thought and action has made this mode of ritual praxis very difficult to imagine in a philosophical context'.[87] This division is especially misleading when attempting to understand Iamblichus' theurgy, the highest stages of which include noetic, immaterial and incorporeal practices conceptualised by Iamblichus as *ritual action*, utilised for the purpose of connecting the theurgist to the gods and transforming the theurgist's consciousness. Mazur coins the term 'inner ritual' to articulate this liminal category of practice in Late Antiquity and to describe 'the numerous traditional techniques in which the subjective consciousness is deliberately controlled in a prescribed manner for a discrete period of time, and whose experiential content is patterned upon more outward ritual procedures'.[88] This category of ritual practice does not seem to have been explicitly theorised by historians of Late Antique religion or philosophy prior to Mazur's work, but his

[84] Bell (1992), 19; 47–48; Keller (2002), 65–66.

[85] Mazur (2004), 43.

[86] Cf. Mazur (2004), 43. Interiorised ritual (and contemplation) in Tantra and Tantric Buddhism: Beyer (1973), 25–143; Heesterman (1985), 26–44; Brauen (1992; repr. 1997), 63–65; 106–107; White (2003), 219–257; Child (2007).

[87] Mazur (2004), 43–44. Cf. also Mazur (2003), 23–52, for the claim that Plotinus' techniques of visualisation and contemplation are modelled on earlier ritual patterns.

[88] Cf. Mazur (2004), 44, who also states: 'In certain cases, these techniques are accompanied by corresponding physical acts, but given this new definition, inner ritual would need no overt physical expression for it to be considered "ritual."'

term 'inner ritual' will be utilised below in a comparison of Plotinian contemplation and visualisation with Iamblichean theurgy.[89]

Within scholarship on the role of ritual in Neoplatonism, the rigid dichotomy between thought and action is often implicitly accompanied by a division between rationality and irrationality, with Plotinian contemplation commonly categorised as 'rational' while Iamblichean theurgy has often been characterised as 'irrational'. For example, E.R. Dodds' famous assessment of Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* as 'a manifesto of irrationalism, an assertion that the road to salvation is found not in reason but in ritual' clearly opposes rationality and ritual according to a Cartesian dichotomy between thought and action, and consequently equates ritual with irrationalism.[90] Yet we have seen above that this dichotomy is based on a narrow hypothetico-deductive model of 'rationality' which has inherent problems and has consequently been critiqued from philosophical and anthropological perspectives.[91] An instrumental model of rationality based on an evaluation of the means/end calculation of the decision maker allows greater scope for exploring ritual systems such as Neoplatonic theurgy.[92] Furthermore, the division between 'rationality' and 'irrationality' seems somewhat anachronistic, given that Iamblichus characterises theurgic ritual as *supra-rational*, in the sense that it transcends rationality, rather than lacks it.[93] Yet this transcendence of rationality through theurgy implicitly relies on the inclusion and culmination of rationality. For Iamblichus as for many other ancient philosophers, rationality and the noetic and hyper-noetic supra-rational vision are interdependent and interlinked cognitive states, although supra-rationality is ontologically and hierarchically superior. In his analysis of the philosophical *Hermetica*, which arose within the same cultural and philosophical

[89] Mazur (2004), 44, n. 53, notes that unfortunately Hadot's discussion of 'spiritual exercises' tends to conflate this type of praxis with the philosophical life in general and consequently obscures the close relationship of these techniques with specific ritual procedures. Cf. Hadot (1995), 81–144. For interiorised ritual in Late Antiquity, cf. Fowden (1986), 142–150, especially 147–148, on the concept of 'mental' or 'spiritual' sacrifice in the *Hermetica* and in Porphyry.

[90] Dodds (1951), 287.

[91] Cf. above pp. 183–184; Berchman (1991), 184–216.

[92] Cf. Berchman (1991), 185: 'This definition of rationality allows Neoplatonic ritual action and belief into the domain of rationality. It may well be that these ritual beliefs are mistaken, *but this does not imply irrationality*, *or sheer non-rational expressiveness*. For within its Neoplatonic cultural context ritual stands as an element within a wider rational system. Its means are appropriate, and its ends are coherent because for later Platonists ritual is among the best ways of accomplishing a series of intended objectives, such as the ascent of the soul and communion with the divine' [my emphasis].

[93] Cf. Chapter 7, pp. 273–275, for a full exploration of the supra-rational nature of theurgy and divination in Iamblichus' *DM*. Cf. also Bussanich (2005), 483.

milieux as Iamblichean philosophy and which also, like Iamblichus, assert the need of going beyond reason in order to perceive truth, Garth Fowden speaks of:

> ...the ancients' conviction that human and divine knowledge, reason and intuition, are interdependent – a view which continued to prevail in Islam, particularly in Shiite and Sufi circles, but which the Western intellectual tradition has often rejected, decomposing knowledge into independent categories, separating philosophy from theology, and in so doing setting up serious obstacles to the understanding of more unified world-views.[94]

According to this view of cognitive states, rationality and supra-rational states are interdependent, mutually inclusive rather than mutually exclusive. Supra-rationality transcends rationality; yet, to experience supra-rationality the individual must have first trained his or her rational faculties through philosophy (which is why philosophy and intellectual preparation are vital for theurgy). A vital caveat must be mentioned here: I do not mean to suggest that supra-rational states were conceptualised as being attainable in a mechanical or automatic sense by the individual who has trained his or her rational faculties through philosophy. Iamblichus makes it clear, firstly, that supra-rational states are *ultimately* dependent on the will of the gods and, secondly, that receptivity to these states also involves vital ethical and ritual preparation as well. Thus, supra-rationality is envisaged as *more than just the sum of* (or the result of) rationality, which is why it paradoxically marks the simultaneous culmination *and* transcendence of rationality. Therefore, I would suggest that rigid antitheses between thought and action, and between rationality and ritual, can be applied only anachronistically to Neoplatonism, whether this is the interiorised contemplation and visualisation of Plotinus or the theurgy of Iamblichus.

Iamblichus on Theurgy and the Question of Ritual

The Relationship between Theurgy and Philosophy

The rigid distinction made by scholars between thought and action, and the consequent dichotomy often applied to concepts of rationality and ritual, seem inadequate for conceptualising Iamblichean theurgy. Iamblichus maintains that intellectual contemplation and preparation, philosophy, is a vital prerequisite for the practice of theurgy; furthermore, the theurgist must actively cultivate his or her receptivity in order to attain a pure and perfect receptacle for the god to manifest

[94] Fowden (1986), 101.

through during the course of the ritual.[95] This cultivation of receptivity involves intellectual as well as ethical and ritual preparation. Moreover, Iamblichus claims that both philosophy and theurgy are god-given. Therefore, although philosophy is clearly not identical with theurgy, it retains an intimate relationship with it, as indicated by Iamblichus' characterisation of Pythagoras:

> ἔτι δέ φασι καὶ σύνθετον αὐτὸν ποιῆσαι τὴν θείαν φιλοσοφίαν καὶ θεραπείαν, ἃ μὲν μαθόντα παρὰ τῶν Ὀρφικῶν, ἃ δὲ παρὰ τῶν Αἰγυπτίων ἱερέων, ἃ δὲ παρὰ Χαλδαίων καὶ μάγων, ἃ δὲ παρὰ τῆς τελετῆς τῆς ἐν Ἐλευσῖνι γιγνομένης, ἐν Ἴμβρῳ τε καὶ Σαμοθρᾴκῃ καὶ Λήμνῳ...
>
> Moreover, they say that *he made a synthesis of divine philosophy and worship of the gods*, having learned some things from the Orphics, others from the Egyptian priests; some from the Chaldeans and the magi, others from the mystic rites in Eleusis, Imbros, Samothrace and Lemnos ... [my emphasis].[96]

Given that Iamblichus' *On the Pythagorean Way of Life* has clear protreptic purposes, with Pythagoras' life used as the paradigmatic example of the ideal life, the assertion that Pythagoras synthesised divine philosophy and worship of the gods is presumably emblematic of Iamblichus' own view of the relationship between philosophy and ritual worship of the gods: they are to be viewed as potentially part of a continuum rather than as mutually exclusive alternatives.[97] Furthermore, Iamblichus discusses Pythagoras' initiation into mystery rituals and worship of the gods:

> ἐνταῦθα δὴ συμβαλὼν τοῖς τε Μώχου τοῦ φυσιολόγου προφήτου ἀπογόνοις καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις Φοινικικοῖς ἱεροφάνταις, καὶ πάσας τελεσθεὶς θείας τελετὰς ἔν τε Βύβλῳ καὶ Τύρῳ καὶ κατὰ πολλὰ τῆς Συρίας μέρη ἐξαιρέτως ἱερουργουμένας, καὶ οὐχὶ δεισιδαιμονίας ἕνεκα τὸ τοιοῦτον ὑπομείνας, ὡς ἄν τις ἁπλῶς ὑπολάβοι, πολὺ δὲ μᾶλλον ἔρωτι καὶ ὀρέξει θεωρίας καὶ εὐλαβείᾳ τοῦ μή τι αὐτὸν τῶν ἀξιομαθήτων διαλάθῃ ἐν θεῶν ἀπορρήτοις ἢ τελεταῖς φυλλαττόμενον...
>
> There he joined the descendants of Mochus, the prophet and natural philosopher, and other Phoenician hierophants, and was initiated into all sacred rites of the mysteries celebrated especially in Byblos and in Tyre, and in many parts of Syria.

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95 Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 26–28; Iamblichus, *VP* 2.10.

96 Iamblichus, *VP* 28.151.

97 Cf. Chapter 4, p. 152.

> (Pythagoras) did not experience these as a result of superstition, as someone might foolishly suppose, but much more with a desire and yearning for theoretical knowledge and a reverent concern that nothing worthy of learning kept in the secrets or mystic rites of the gods escape his notice.[98]

Iamblichus' characterisation of Pythagoras again suggests that 'theoretical knowledge' and learning are not dichotomously opposed to ritual, but are intimately linked with it, forming vital prerequisites and adjuncts to effective participation in ritual.

The Conflation of Thought and Action (and Subject and Object) in Theurgy

The rigid dichotomy often applied by scholars to concepts of rationality and ritual obscures much of Iamblichus' description of theurgic ritual, which seems to dissolve the boundaries between thought and action, rationality and ritual, interior and exterior, and material and immaterial:

> τὸ μὲν ὡς παρ' ἀνθρώπων προσαγόμενον, ὅπερ δὴ τηρεῖ καὶ τὴν ἡμετέραν τάξιν ὡς ἔχει φύσεως ἐν τῷ παντί, τὸ δὲ κρατυνόμενον τοῖς θείοις συνθήμασι καὶ ἄνω μετέωρον δι' αὐτῶν τοῖς κρείττοσι συναπτόμενον, περιαγόμενόν τε ἐμμελῶς ἐπὶ τὴν ἐκείνων διακόσμησιν, ὃ δὴ δύναται εἰκότως καὶ τὸ τῶν θεῶν σχῆμα περιτίθεσθαι. Κατὰ τὴν τοιαύτην οὖν διαφορὰν εἰκότως καὶ ὡς κρείττονας καλεῖ τὰς ἀπὸ τοῦ παντὸς δυνάμεις, καθόσον ἐστὶν ὁ καλῶν ἄνθρωπος, καὶ ἐπιτάττει αὐταῖς αὖθις, ἐπειδὴ περιβάλλεταί πως διὰ τῶν ἀπορρήτων συμβόλων τὸ ἱερατικὸν τῶν θεῶν πρόσχημα.
>
> On the one hand, it is performed by men, and as such observes our natural rank in the universe; but on the other, it controls divine symbols, and in virtue of them is raised up to union with the higher powers, and directs itself harmoniously in accordance with their dispensation, which enables it quite properly to assume the mantle of the gods. It is in virtue of this distinction, then, that the art both naturally invokes the powers from the universe as superiors, inasmuch as the invoker is a man, and yet on the other hand gives them orders, since it invests itself, by virtue of the ineffable symbols, with the hieratic role of the gods.[99]

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98 Iamblichus, *VP* 3.14.

99 Iamblichus, *DM* 4.2 (184.2–10).

Thus, ritual acts have an inherent 'doubleness', according to Iamblichus: from one perspective, they are performed by humans, yet all humans have a pre-ontological link with the divine in their soul, since it contains 'images of the gods':

> Καὶ ἔτι ἀθρόαν τὴν μυστικὴν καὶ ἀπόρρητον εἰκόνα τῶν θεῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ διαφυλάττομεν, καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν δι' αὐτῶν ἀνάγομεν ἐπὶ τοὺς θεούς, καὶ ἀναχθεῖσαν κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν τοῖς θεοῖς συνάπτομεν.
>
> And, moreover, we preserve in their entirety the mystical and arcane images of the gods in our soul; and we raise our soul up through these towards the gods and, as far as is possible, when it has been elevated, we experience union with the gods.[100]

Theurgic ritual, by using symbols, activates the soul's pre-ontological connection with the divine allowing the soul to assume 'the hieratic role of the gods' . Yet this process is only possible because of the gods' providential and beneficent nature: they constantly shed their divine light on those who attain insight into them.[101] According to Iamblichus then, in theurgic ritual the divine communicates with the divine.[102] Subject and object are dissolved to some extent in Iamblichus' explanation. However, the divine still maintains its transcendence and its causal superiority: in Iamblichean metaphysics, the gods are both transcendent and immanent simultaneously.[103] In this sense, Iamblichus' description dissolves the boundary between exterior and interior, since the theurgist is said to connect to 'the images of the gods in the soul' (an interior connection) and with the transcendent gods (an exterior connection) *simultaneously*. By investing himself with the hieratic role of the gods, the theurgist dissolves the boundary between thought and action since, according to Neoplatonic metaphysics, in the noetic realm (and in the hyper-noetic realm) there is no distinction between thought and action.

Theurgy and Contemplation

Scholars have often cited the following passage of Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* to support the notion that theurgic ritual is distinct from Plotinian contemplation:

> ...οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡ ἔννοια συνάπτει τοῖς θεοῖς τοὺς θεουργούς· ἐπεὶ τί ἐκώλυε τοὺς θεωρητικῶς φιλοσοφοῦντας ἔχειν τὴν θεουργικὴν

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[100] Iamblichus, *DM* 7.4 (255.13–256.2). Cf. *DM* 1.12 (41.9–13).

[101] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.12 (41.3–8); cf. also 1.12 (40.14–41.2; 42.5–7); 1.14 (44.8–11); 1.15 (49.3–5).

[102] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.15 (47.3–9). Cf. Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell (2003), 59, n. 86.

[103] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.8 (27.7–29.7); 1.9 (29.13–30.2); Shaw (1995), 29–30, n. 6.

> ἕνωσιν πρὸς τοὺς θεούς; νῦν δ' οὐκ ἔχει τό γε ἀληθὲς οὕτως· ἀλλ' ἡ τῶν ἔργων τῶν ἀρρήτων καὶ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν νόησιν θεοπρεπῶς ἐνεργουμένων τελεσιουργία ἥ τε τῶν νοουμένων τοῖς θεοῖς μόνον συμβόλων ἀφθέγκτων δύναμις ἐντίθησι τὴν θεουργικὴν ἕνωσιν. Διόπερ οὐδὲ τῷ νοεῖν αὐτὰ ἐνεργοῦμεν· ἔσται γὰρ οὕτω νοερὰ αὐτῶν ἡ ἐνέργεια καὶ ἀφ' ἡμῶν ἐνδιδομένη· τὸ δ' οὐδέτερόν ἐστιν ἀληθές. Καὶ γὰρ μὴ νοούντων ἡμῶν αὐτὰ τὰ συνθήματα ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν δρᾷ τὸ οἰκεῖον ἔργον, καὶ ἡ τῶν θεῶν, πρὸς οὓς ἀνήκει ταῦτα, ἄρρητος δύναμις αὐτὴ ἀφ' ἑαυτῆς ἐπιγιγνώσκει τὰς οἰκείας εἰκόνας, ἀλλ' οὐ τῷ διεγείρεσθαι ὑπὸ τῆς ἡμετέρας νοήσεως·
>
> ...it is not pure thought that unites theurgists to the gods. Indeed what, then, would hinder those who are theoretical philosophers from enjoying a theurgic union with the gods? But the situation is not so: it is the accomplishment of acts not to be divulged and beyond all conception, and the power of the unutterable symbols, understood solely by the gods, which establishes theurgic union. Hence, we do not bring about these things by intellection alone; for thus their efficacy would be intellectual, and dependent upon us. But neither assumption is true. For even when we are not engaged in intellection, the symbols themselves, by themselves, perform their appropriate work, and the ineffable power of the gods, to whom these symbols relate, itself recognises the proper images of itself, not through being aroused by our thought.[104]

This passage is often construed as definitive evidence of the mechanistic operation of theurgy, depending on the performance of actions and lacking all thought and intellection on the part of the theurgist. It has also been taken as confirmation of a categorical division between the ritual acts of theurgists such as Iamblichus and the 'pure contemplation' of Plotinus.[105] However, several factors suggest that this passage does not support such a facile distinction between theurgy and contemplation. Firstly, it has been noted that the way in which Iamblichus uses the terms νόησις and γνῶσις in this passage resembles the Plotinian concept of διάνοια (discursive reason), rather than unified intuition and contemplation; this γνῶσις is characterised as knowledge of facts.[106] Secondly, given Iamblichus' explanation of the 'doubleness' of theurgic ritual and the fact that the theurgist takes on the 'hieratic role of the gods', the statement that the 'power of the gods, to whom these symbols relate, itself recognises the proper images of itself' seems to be a reiteration of the notion that theurgic ritual dissolves (to a certain extent) the subject–object boundary between humans and gods. Therefore,

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104 Iamblichus, *DM* 2.11 (96.11–97.7).

105 Cf. Dodds (1951), 287. Cf. the comments of Shaw (1995), 84; Chlup (2012), 173.

106 Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 2.11 (98.4–7); Smith (1974), 85; Bussanich (2002), 53.

rather than constituting a complete rejection of thought and intellection, this passage emphasises the supra-rational and divine role attained by the theurgist within ritual. The human theurgist attains a certain kind of divinity (through connecting with the divine images in his soul) and thus awakens to the power of the symbols. Thus, rather than using human thought, the theurgist attains a kind of divine consciousness which enables him to see from the perspective of the gods, a perspective which is superior to human intellection while innately containing pure intellection. It is precisely this type of divine consciousness which Iamblichus connects with notions of divine inspiration and possession, the phenomena which are considered to underlie oracles and other forms of 'inspired divination', such as were utilised within theurgic ritual.[107]

Iamblichus' subsequent comments in *De Mysteriis* 2.11 support this view, for a few lines later he states that 'Effective union certainly never takes place without knowledge, but nevertheless it is not identical with it' (Ἀλλ' οὐκ ἄνευ μὲν τοῦ γνῶναι παραγίγνεταί ποτε ἡ δραστικὴ ἕνωσις, οὐ μὴν ἔχει γε πρὸς αὐτὴν ταὐτότητα).[108] Theurgic union is not identical with knowledge or intellection, yet these are vital prerequisites for theurgic ritual, without which union with the gods would *never* happen:

> Ὅθεν δὴ οὐδ' ὑπὸ τῶν ἡμετέρων νοήσεων προηγουμένως τὰ θεῖα αἴτια προκαλεῖται εἰς ἐνέργειαν· ἀλλὰ ταύτας μὲν καὶ τὰς ὅλας τῆς ψυχῆς ἀρίστας διαθέσεις καὶ τὴν περὶ ἡμᾶς καθαρότητα ὡς συναίτια ἄττα προϋποκεῖσθαι χρή, τὰ δ' ὡς κυρίως ἐγείροντα τὴν θείαν βούλησιν αὐτὰ τὰ θεῖά ἐστι συνθέματα·
>
> Hence it is not even chiefly through our intellection that divine causes are called into actuality; but it is necessary for these and all the best conditions of the soul and our ritual purity to pre-exist as auxiliary causes; but the things which properly arouse the divine will are the actual divine symbols.[109]

Intellectual and ethical purifications were considered to be central elements in the cultivation of 'receptivity' undertaken by the theurgist, without which there could be no ascent to or union with the divine.[110] Iamblichus emphasises their role as lower, auxiliary causes for the union which are subordinate to the gods,

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[107] Cf. Chapter 6, pp. 216–222; 226–229; Chapter 7, pp. 273–275. Smith (1974), 88–89, also recognises the similarities with Iamblichus' description of divination here, but characterises them as 'sinister' because he is influenced by Dodds' characterisation of theurgic divination as similar or equivalent to the modern spiritualist's concept of a medium and mediumistic trance.

[108] Iamblichus, *DM* 2.11 (98.6–7). Cf. Chlup (2012), 174.

[109] Iamblichus, *DM* 2.11 (97.9–13).

[110] Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 26–28.

the ultimate or primary cause of theurgic union; yet it is clear that these multiple causes are envisaged as operating simultaneously and all must be in place (even the subordinate causes) for a theurgic procedure to be effective.[111] As Andrew Smith notes, 'it is not legitimate to say that Iamblichus does away with νόησις in union, since what he is trying to stress here is that the ultimate *causality* of union is above νόησις'.[112]

Following on from this, Iamblichus clearly cannot be disregarding *any* kind of noetic approach to the gods, for he often refers to the role of intellection (νόησις) in theurgy. 'The most blessed intellection of the gods' (ἡ μακαριωτάτη τῶν θεῶν νόησις) comes as a result of theurgic divination.[113] Iamblichus links divine love (θεία φιλία) with Intellect (νοῦς) in his discussion of sacrifices.[114] Furthermore, Iamblichus characterises hieratic cult, by which he means theurgy, as follows:

> οὐχ αὕτη μὲν κατὰ θεσμοὺς θεῶν νοερῶς τε κατ' ἀρχὰς ἐνομοθετήθη; μιμεῖται δὲ τὴν τῶν θεῶν τάξιν, τήν τε νοητὴν καὶ τὴν ἐν οὐρανῷ. Ἔχει δὲ μέτρα τῶν ὄντων ἀίδια καὶ ἐνθήματα θαυμαστά, οἷα ἀπὸ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ καὶ πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων δεῦρο καταπεμφθέντα, οἷς καὶ τὰ μὲν ἄφθεγκτα διὰ συμβόλων ἀπορρήτων ἐκφωνεῖται ...
>
> Was not this cult established by law at the beginning intellectually, according to the ordinances of the gods? It imitates the order of the gods, both the intelligible and that in the heavens. It possesses eternal measures of what truly exists and wondrous tokens, such as have been sent down hither by the creator and father of all, by means of which unutterable truths are expressed through secret symbols ...[115]

Theurgy is established 'intellectually' by the gods and, moreover, theurgic ritual imitates the order of the gods, both hypercosmic (noetic) and encosmic. Thus, rather than representing a lack of intellection, Iamblichus envisages theurgy as containing the very summit and culmination of intellection, while also

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[111] Iamblichus' hierarchical scheme of multiple causation and its application to divination: cf. Chapter 7, pp. 240; 243–250.

[112] Smith (1974), 87, who perceptively interprets Iamblichus' characterisation of theurgic union at *DM* 2.11 (96.14) as 'beyond all conception' (ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν νόησιν) in light of this concept of causality. He also suggests that Iamblichus may mean that theurgic union is beyond all *human* νόησις (rather than implicating divine νόησις).

[113] Iamblichus, *DM* 10.4 (289.7; 289.3–5); Smith (1974), 86; Fowden (1986), 134 and n. 78, also notes Iamblichus' use of noetic vocabulary in connection with theurgical experience.

[114] Iamblichus, *DM* 5.10 (211.11); Smith (1974), 94.

[115] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.21 (65.3–8).

simultaneously transcending pure intellection, *but through the power of the gods*.[116] Furthermore Iamblichus is explicit that truth co-exists in its essence with the gods, not merely in harmony in them, because it is based in the intelligible realm.[117] Thus, contact with the gods must be linked with truth, suggesting the notion that rationality (conceived as the limited, human means of arriving at truth or 'recollecting' truth) is contained in a complete and unified sense in the gods. Iamblichus claims that it is only with theurgists who have genuinely gained union with the gods that the beginning and end of all good is seriously practised and he states that:

> ἐνταῦθα δὴ οὖν καὶ ἡ τῆς ἀληθείας πάρεστι θέα καὶ ἡ τῆς νοερᾶς ἐπιστήμης, καὶ μετὰ τῆς τῶν θεῶν γνώσεως ἡ πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς ἐπιστροφὴ καὶ ἡ γνῶσις ἑαυτῶν συνέπεται.
>
> It is there, then, that there occurs the vision of truth and intellectual understanding, and with knowledge of the gods follows a turning towards ourselves and knowledge of ourselves.[118]

Iamblichus explicitly envisages theurgic union with the gods as including visions of truth and intellectual understanding: thus, for Iamblichus, it must contain reason (or 'rationality') while simultaneously transcending discursive reason or rationality, for truth is perceived or 'seen' in a unified and complete sense, without divisions. This divine mode of vision is what we can term 'supra-rationality'. Furthermore, in his discussion of the three different 'stages' of theurgy appropriate to the three classes of individuals, Iamblichus specifies:

> Οἱ δὲ κατὰ νοῦν μόνον καὶ τὴν τοῦ νοῦ ζωὴν τὸν βίον διάγοντες, τῶν δὲ τῆς φύσεως δεσμῶν ἀπολυθέντες, νοερὸν καὶ ἀσώματον ἱερατικῆς θεσμὸν διαμελετῶσι περὶ πάντα τῆς θεουργίας τὰ μέρη.
>
> Those, on the other hand, who conduct their lives in accordance with intellect alone and the life according to intellect, and who have been freed from the bonds of nature, practise an intellectual and incorporeal rule of sacred procedure in respect of all the departments of theurgy.[119]

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[116] Smith (1974), 88, describes this as follows: 'It is to the realm of pure νόησις that he [Iamblichus] bids man to return. The unifying power of the gods is thus above all human νόησις, but this human νόησις is a necessary part of ascent, the human co-operation with the divine, and is somehow enhanced and lifted up so that it becomes, in a transformed way, part of the experience of union itself.'

[117] Iamblichus, *DM* 10.2 (287.3–4). Cf. also 2.10 (90.13–91.1; 91.2-5; 92.13–14).

[118] Iamblichus, *DM* 10.1 (286.7–10).

[119] Iamblichus, *DM* 5.18 (225.1–4).

As discussed in Chapter 1, scholars have viewed this statement as evidence for a 'higher' form of theurgy which did not involve ritual acts. They have often attempted to differentiate it from 'lower' types of theurgy according to a categorisation of material ritual (lower) and intellectual practice (higher theurgy), or according to 'vertical' (connecting with their divine cause) and 'horizontal' (operating within the physical cosmos) criteria.[120] Yet, as we have seen, Iamblichus is explicit that all theurgic activity should be defined as 'vertical'.[121] Even the so-called 'lower' level of theurgic ritual, utilising material objects, works on a 'vertical' axis, using the material symbols (σύμβολα) to connect the theurgist to the gods. The three stages can only be distinguished according to the kind of gods worshipped (encosmic or hypercosmic) and according to the kind of symbols (σύμβολα) utilised by each type of person, which depends on the latter's receptivity (and involves their relationship with matter).[122] Those who practised theurgy at the 'higher' stage were clearly thought to utilise noetic symbols rather than symbols in the form of material objects. Yet, crucially, these noetic symbols must still be seen as *ritual* objects because they were envisaged as directly transforming the soul and awakening it to the presence of the gods rather than teaching the soul in a discursive sense: thus, even practices using noetic symbols must still be seen as *ritual acts*.[123] Scholars have implied that the fact that this level of theurgy is described as 'intellectual and incorporeal' (νοερὸν καὶ ἀσώματον) necessarily entails its exclusion of ritual acts.[124] Yet such a judgement clearly imposes the Cartesian dichotomy between thought and action on ancient ideas of ritual. The use and visualisation of noetic symbols (σύμβολα) was clearly considered to be a *ritual act* by Iamblichus. For this type of praxis, Mazur's term 'inner ritual' seems especially relevant and useful.[125] John Dillon has compared this 'incorporeal' theurgy with the transcendental meditation techniques known from Eastern religions and has suggested that this type of theurgy revolved around 'a series of spiritual exercises based on the contemplation of images of light', noting that Iamblichus and Proclus emphasise the crucial role played by light, which was visualised as illuminating the soul from all around, filling it with fire and uniting it to the light of the gods.[126] This

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120 Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 39–40.

121 Cf. for example, *DM* 2.11, where Iamblichus is explicitly referring to ritual action but nevertheless is clearly including the highest stages of theurgy; Shaw (1985), 22.

122 Iamblichus, *DM* 5.14 (217.4–218.7; 218.12–13); 5.15 (220.8–14); 5.17–20.

123 Cf. Shaw (1995), 189–191, who argues that noetic symbols were best exemplified by numbers; Trouillard (1982), 12; 233.

124 Cf. for example, Rosán (1949), 213–214; Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 462–463; Sheppard (1982), 217, although Smith (1974), 90, has reservations about distinguishing between types of theurgy in terms of ritual.

125 Mazur (2004), 43–44.

126 Dillon (2002), 91; Proclus, *In Tim.* I.211.27–28; Iamblichus, *DM* 10.6; Chlup (2012), 179.

suggests important parallels with Plotinus' interiorised visualisations and spiritual exercises, for in his descriptions of the ultimate ascent to the One he frequently speaks of the soul being illuminated with light and completely filled with it.[127]

Moreover, Iamblichus includes many positive references to the role of contemplation (θεωρία) within theurgic praxis, of which one instance is particularly revealing:

> ...τὴν ἑαυτῶν οὐσίαν προηγουμένως ἀναφαίνει τοῖς θεωροῦσι· διόπερ δὴ καὶ τὸ αὐτοπτικὸν πῦρ τοῖς θεουργοῖς ἐπιδείκνυσιν.
>
> ...[the gods] reveal at the outset their own being to those who contemplate (θεωροῦσι) them; hence, they show in particular performers of the sacramental rites the fire in a direct vision of divinity.[128]

Thus, contemplation is envisaged as playing a direct role in the visions of the gods. Iamblichus also refers to those 'who love to contemplate theurgic truth' (φιλοθεάμονας τῆς θεουργικῆς ἀληθείας).[129] When Iamblichus contrasts the ritual practices of the magician (γόης) and the theurgist, he states that the magician (γόης) 'overlooks the whole procedure of effective contemplation' (οἳ τὴν ὅλην πραγματείαν τῆς τελεσιουργοῦ θεωρίας παριδόντες), implying that the theurgist engages in effective contemplation which contributes in some sense (clearly a subordinate, auxiliary sense) towards the effective performance of theurgic ritual.[130]

So the conflation of thought and action envisaged as effected through theurgy is instantiated partially through the roles of intellection and contemplation in theurgy, although the use of contemplation and noetic symbols need to be envisaged as ritual acts because they were considered to transform the soul (rather than teaching it discursively). Furthermore, it is important to note that Iamblichus explicitly claims that theurgic ritual actions affect our thought: extended practice of prayer, he says, 'nurtures our intellect' (τρέφει μὲν τὸν ἡμέτερον νοῦν), 'elevates gently the dispositions of our minds, and communicates to us those of the gods' (τὰ μὲν ἡμέτερα τῆς διανοίας ἤθη ἠρέμα ἀνέλκει, τὰ δὲ τῶν θεῶν ἡμῖν ἐκδίδωσι...) and 'gradually brings to perfection the capacity of our faculties for contact with the gods, until it leads us up to the highest levels of consciousness' (κατὰ βραχὺ δὲ τελειοῖ τὰ ἐν ἡμῖν πρὸς τὰς

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127 Cf. for example Plotinus, *Enn*. V.3.17.28–38; V.5.7; VI.7.36.15–27.

128 Iamblichus, *DM* 2.10 (92.14–93.2). Cf. 1.12 (41.10); 1.19 (59.10); 2.4 (77.3); 2.9 (88.1; 88.13–14); 3.1 (101.12–102.6); 3.2 (104.8–10); 3.3 (106.11–12); 3.6 (112.11); 3.28 (167.10–11).

129 Iamblichus, *DM* 5.21 (228.11–12); 3.29 (172.8–9).

130 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.13 (131.4–132.2). Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 35–36.

τῶν θεῶν συναφάς, ἕως ἂν ἐπὶ τὸ ἀκρότατον ἡμᾶς ἐπαναγάγῃ...).[131] According to Iamblichus' model of theurgy, ritual action can also affect thought and intellection. In relation to this, the concept of the 'vehicle of the soul' (ὄχημα πνευμα), the subtle or astral body, which acts as a bridge between the soul and body, was thought to play a crucial role in divination and theurgy.[132] This vehicle was considered to have a mediating and median nature, since it was envisaged as less material then the physical body but more material than the soul; given this mediating function, further study of the role of the soul vehicle in ritual praxis may assist in extending or moving beyond the Cartesian mind–body dualism which underlies the dichotomous opposition between thought and action often imposed on ritual.[133]

Plotinus on Contemplation and Mystical Union with the One

Having examined the roles of intellection and contemplation in theurgy, it is important to examine the relationship of Plotinus' praxis to theurgy. As part of the gradual but long overdue rehabilitation of Plotinus' successors, it has been suggested that the theurgy developed by Plotinus' successors was a legitimate response to certain elements of Plotinian metaphysics.[134] Yet certain scholars have gone further and argued that the highest phase of Plotinus' contemplation shares structural features and characteristics with certain theurgic rituals and, further,

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131 Iamblichus, *DM* 5.26 (238.12–239.5).

132 On the role of the soul vehicle in oracles and dream divination, cf. Chapter 6, pp. 225–226; Chapter 7, p. 256. Cf. also Finamore (1985). For a detailed study of the role of the soul vehicle in divination and theurgy and the way in which these roles may help us in extending or moving beyond rigid mind–body and thought–action dichotomies, cf. Addey (2013a), 149–167, which especially focuses on the role of the soul vehicle in Iamblichus' discussion of two types of divination – oracles and 'evoking the light' (φωτὸς ἀγωγὴν or φωταγωγία), the latter of which involved shining light on water in bowls or cups, or on a wall, in order to invoke the appearance of divine beings.

133 Neoplatonist philosophers derived their ideas about the soul vehicle from Plato's *Timaeus* 41e (the Demiurge mounted the souls each upon a star 'as upon a vehicle') and from the *Phaedrus* myth (246a), where the soul is likened to a chariot travelling through the heavens. These Platonic allusions were combined with Aristotle's concept of πνεῦμα, the airy substance which serves as the locus of the imaginative soul, which Aristotle compared with ether – the element of which the stars are made (*Generation of Animals* 736b.35–39). Who first combined Plato's ὄχημα with Aristotle's πνεῦμα is unknown but by the late third century A.D. the ὄχημα πνεῦμα was an established philosophical doctrine. Cf. Iamblichus, *In. Tim*. F84; Kissling (1922), 318–330; Dodds (1933; repr. 1963), 313–321 (Appendix II); Trouillard (1957), 102–107; Smith (1974), 152–158 (Appendix 2); Finamore (1985); Shaw (1995), 51–53; 105; Schibli (2002), 98–106.

134 Armstrong (1974), 187.

that its only significant difference from later theurgy was its exclusively 'interior' performance.[135] Thus, a comparison of Plotinus' contemplation and instructions for visualisation with theurgy seems appropriate here. Mazur argues that 'it is evident that Plotinus himself would agree that intellection is insufficient to attain union with the gods. It is abundantly clear that Plotinus believes that ordinary knowledge must be transcended and replaced with a more direct form of contact in order to unite with the One.'[136] In *Enn*. VI.9, Plotinus suggests that, at the ultimate stage of praxis, contemplation *itself* must be discarded.[137] Yet even when Plotinus advocates contemplation (θεωρία), he does not mean abstract, discursive philosophy, but rather he explicitly conflates it with efficacious action: *all* creative acts, even those of Nature, are imperfect attempts at contemplation.[138] Thus, Plotinus' notion of productive contemplation dissolves the apparent dichotomy between thought and action, blurring any distinction between philosophical and religious praxis.[139] Furthermore, it may be useful to recall the origins of the term θεωρία: when Plato and other Classical philosophers began to use the term they were actually invoking a specific civic and cultural institution, for in Classical Greece, the term referred to a religious journey or pilgrimage to a religious sanctuary to witness sacred spectacles; it particularly took the form of pilgrimages (both civic or public and private) to oracles and religious festivals.[140] Thus, the term originally connoted 'ritualized visuality' and implicitly referred to a type of viewing that involved ritual.[141] When fourth-century philosophers began to use the term to describe a form of 'seeing' divine truths, they placed great emphasis on this sense of the

[135] Shaw (1999), 121–143; Bussanich (2002), 39–61; Mazur (2004), 29–56. Cf. also Mazur (2003), 23–52.

[136] Mazur (2004), 42. Cf. also Chlup (2012), 174.

[137] Plotinus, *Enn*. VI.9.11.22–25. Cf. also VI.7.40.1–2 (νόησις is excluded in contact with the One or Good).

[138] Plotinus, *Enn*. III.8.1–4; III.8.5.1–3; Mazur (2004), 42 and n. 49. The idea that the entire hypostatic structure of Plotinian metaphysics has to be understood as a kind of *experience* has been suggested by Wallis (1976), 121–153 and by Lloyd (1990), 126, who states: 'The hypostases are experiences, they are types of consciousness; while, therefore, they have abstract and objective properties, they also have what we call phenomenological properties'.

[139] Mazur (2004), 42.

[140] Cf. Wilson Nightingale (2004), 3–4; 40–71, who specifies three senses of the original term in Greek culture: pilgrimages to religious sanctuaries and festivals (especially the consultation of oracles), pilgrimage to Panhellenic sanctuaries, and festivals and journeys to foreign lands in search of wisdom.

[141] Cf. Elsner (2000), 61, characterises the defining feature of this type of θεωρία as 'ritual-centered visuality' and describes the *theoros* (the individual undertaking the θεωρία) as entering a sacred space, a 'liminal site in which the viewer enters the god's world and likewise the deity intrudes directly into the viewer's world in a highly ritualized context'; Wilson Nightingale (2004), 44–47.

term – the pilgrimage to religious festivals and sanctuaries.[142] Scholars have generally treated Plato's comparisons of philosophic 'spectating' to θεωρία at religious, panhellenic festivals as superficial metaphors. Although Plato clearly transformed and extended the term, Wilson Nightingale demonstrates the vital link between philosophical theorising and the traditional, cultural and religious practice of θεωρία.[143] The original connotations of the term centralised *ritual modes of viewing*; while Plato and later Neoplatonist philosophers transform the term to describe philosophical theorising, the cultural background and connotations of the term nevertheless must have remained significant. These connotations may well imply a 'philosophical' mode of vision envisioned as ritualised in some sense – but at the very least they hint at a more complex set of connotations than simple discursive rational thought and 'secular' theorising, notions often taken in scholarship to delineate the complete nature of philosophical θεωρία.

Returning to Plotinus' attitude towards contemplation and intellection, John Bussanich has noted that Iamblichus' devaluation of 'our intellection' is consistent with the Plotinian devaluation of διάνοια (discursive reasoning) in comparison to νόησις.[144] Furthermore, Bussanich maintains that, 'Iamblichus' view on the status of ancillary causes is analogous, it seems to me, to Plotinus' stipulations about preparing for the vision of the One in VI.7[38] 36 and elsewhere.'[145] In the more advanced stages of ascent Plotinus rejects discursive reasoning in favour of a kind of meditation, usually described in evocative but apparently metaphorical terms.[146] In a few cases though, Plotinus seems to direct the reader to engage in specific visualisation exercises.[147] Recent scholars have suggested some relationship between this kind of visualisation and theurgy.[148] For example, Plotinus sets out an exercise for contemplation which is extremely interesting in relation to the issue of theurgic ritual praxis involving the vehicle of the soul:

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[142] Cf. Wilson Nightingale (2004), 69–70: 'The fourth-century philosophers conceptualized a mode of "seeing" that resembled ritualized vision in some key ways. First of all, philosophic *theoria* "views" and apprehends objects that are identified as sacred and divine.'

[143] Cf. Wilson Nightingale (2004), 73; 74–138 (θεωρία in Plato's *Republic*, *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*). Wilson Nightingale notes that Plato used 'traditional' θεωρία to legitimise and defend the new discipline of 'theoretical' philosophy, yet these 'discourses of legitimation' should not obscure the strong parallels between traditional and philosophical θεωρία.

[144] Bussanich (2002), 53.

[145] Bussanich (2002), 53.

[146] Cf. Mazur (2004), 44–45.

[147] Plotinus, *Enn.* V.1.2.12–23; V.1.6.9ff.; V.8.11–12; VI.4.7; VI.5.7; VI.7.15–25; possibly V.1.4.1–11 and V.1.2.1-31.

[148] Shaw (1999), 121–143; Rappe (2000), 78–113; 124–128; Dillon (2002), 279–295.

> Τοῦτο τοίνυν τὸν κόσμον, ἑκάστου τῶν μερῶν μένοντος ὅ ἐστι καὶ μὴ συγχεομένου, λάβωμεν τῇ διανοίᾳ, εἰς ἓν ὁμοῦ πάντα, ὡς οἷόν τε, ὥστε ἑνὸς ὁτουοῦν προφαινομένου, οἷον τῆς ἔξω σφαίρας οὔσης, ἀκολουθεῖν εὐθὺς καὶ τὴν ἡλίου καὶ ὁμοῦ τῶν ἄλλων ἄστρων τὴν φαντασίαν, καὶ γῆν καὶ θάλασσαν καὶ πάντα τὰ ζῷα ὁρᾶσθαι, οἷον ἐπὶ σφαίρας διαφανοῦς καὶ ἔργῳ ἂν γένοιτο πάντα ἐνορᾶσθαι. ἔστω οὖν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ φωτεινή τις φαντασία σφαίρας ἔχουσα πάντα ἐν αὐτῇ, εἴτε κινούμενα εἴτε ἑστηκότα, ἢ τὰ μὲν κινούμενα, τὰ δ' ἑστηκότα. φυλάττων δὲ ταύτην ἄλλην παρὰ σαυτῷ ἀφελὼν τὸν ὄγκον λάβε· ἄφελε δὲ καὶ τοὺς τόπους καὶ τὸ τῆς ὕλης ἐν σοὶ φάντασμα, καὶ μὴ πειρῶ αὐτῆς ἄλλην σμικροτέραν λαβεῖν τῷ ὄγκῳ, θεὸν δὲ καλέσας τὸν πεποιηκότα ἧς ἔχεις τὸ φάντασμα εὖξαι ἐλθεῖν.
>
> Let us then apprehend in our thought this visible universe, with each of its parts remaining what it is without confusion, gathering all of them together into one as far as we can, so that when any one part appears first, for instance the outside heavenly sphere, the imagination of the sun and, with it, the other heavenly bodies follows immediately, and the earth and sea and all the living creatures are seen, as they could in fact all be seen inside a transparent sphere. Let there be, then, in the soul a shining imagination of a sphere, having everything within it, either moving or standing still, or some things moving and others standing still. Keep this, and apprehend in your mind another, taking away the mass: take away also the places, and the mental picture of matter in yourself, and do not try to apprehend another sphere smaller in mass than the original one, but calling on the god who made that of which you have the mental picture, pray him to come.[149]

Although ostensibly describing the cosmos and the World Soul, Plotinus' words evoke the idea of the vehicle of the soul in its spherical state.[150] Since this passage comprises a spiritual, contemplative exercise prescribed to produce a transformation of consciousness in the philosopher, it might be tentatively suggested that it represents an 'inner ritual' designed to work not only on the soul of the philosopher but also on his soul vehicle. Indeed, this instruction for visualisation has important parallels with theurgic doctrine and its content

[149] Plotinus, *Enn.* V.8.9.1–15; 15-28.

[150] Cf. Addey (2013a), 152–153; 162–163. A vital caveat must be mentioned here: the similarity with later descriptions of the vehicle of the soul in its spherical state may arise because later philosophers describe the soul vehicle as a reflection of the World Soul. However, it must be noted that Plotinus of course also ascribes a microcosmic nature to the human being: cf., for example, *Enn*. V.1.10.5–13; V.1.12.1–3.

suggests a theurgic evocation.[151] The central premise of theurgy is that an affinity (ultimately deriving from divine love) between the symbol (σύμβολον) and its respective deity allows the attraction of divine power into the practitioner's soul. It has been suggested that the mental image in this visualisation exercise itself serves the function of the theurgic symbol (σύμβολον), because it summons into the soul the god who created its archetype, although in this case the symbol is not a material object but rather an 'internal' likeness.[152] Mazur argues that several passages in the *Enneads* which describe the approach to the One follow a similar pattern.[153] According to Mazur, this pattern consists of, 'at the penultimate stage of ascent, (1) the dualistic vision of the One corresponds to the conjuration of a mental *symbolon* ... At the ultimate stage, (2) the mystical union with the One corresponds to the theurgic conjunction with the deity established through the contemplative *symbolon*.'[154] Mazur notes that although Plotinus does not explicitly theorise such practices, they are consistent with two central principles of his metaphysics, principles which would also support theurgy as it was envisaged by later Neoplatonists: (1) Plotinus' emphasis on the conjunctive and dynamic attraction between an entity on a superior ontological level and its manifestation on an inferior one; and (2) a principle of Plotinian metaphysics which involves a concept parallel to that of the symbol (σύμβολον).[155] While Plotinus does not use the technical terms σύμβολον or σύνθημα, he frequently refers to a 'trace' (ἴχνος) or an 'image' (εἰκών) of the One within the individual soul.[156] This trace functions like a theurgic symbol (σύμβολον) because it allows union through the inherent attraction of an image to its original.[157] Such a conception seems similar

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[151] Mazur (2004), 46 and n. 60, points to the ritual undertones of the passage, particularly the reminiscence of the technical term for a ritual 'calling' or invocation of the god – κλῆσις – that Porphyry uses (*Plot.* 10.20) to describe the evocation of Plotinus' guardian *daimon* in what seems to be some kind of theurgic ritual. Dillon (2002), 286 and n. 21, also notes a theurgical sense of 'prayer' in this passage.

[152] Shaw (1999), 121–143.

[153] Cf. for example, Plotinus, *Enn*. V.5.8.3–22; V.8.11.1–19; VI.7.36.10–26; VI.9.7.17–22; VI.9.9.50–60; VI.9.10.9–21; VI.9.11.10–25; Mazur (2003); (2004), 46.

[154] Mazur (2004), 46–47.

[155] Mazur (2004), 47.

[156] Mazur (2004), 48 and n. 67. Cf. for example, Plotinus, *Enn*. VI.7.23.1–5 (ἴχνος); VI.8.18–29, for the image of a centre-point giving traces of itself to the radii and circumference of a circle; I.6.2.7–11 (ἴχνος); III.8.5; III.8.9.18–24; VI.7.31.8–11;VI.9.4.28–30; VI.9.11.5–9 (εἰκών). Mazur (2004), 48, claims that the trace can be understood as the supreme, hyper-noetic portion of Intellect by which one is able to make an ineffable connection with that which utterly transcends intellect: cf. *Enn*. V.3.14; V.5.8.22–23; VI.7.35.19–25; VI.9.3.26–27. Mazur (2004), 48, also notes that this trace is not limited to Intellect: 'Plotinus describes analogous traces ... manifesting each ontological strata on the subjacent one.'

[157] Mazur (2004), 48–49.

to the 'images of the gods in our soul' described by Iamblichus.[158] The parallel is further reinforced by Plotinus' description of this 'trace' as a kind of 'grace' (χάρις) given by the One, through which the soul's union with the One is bestowed.[159] This description bears marked similarities with Iamblichus' concept of 'divine love' (θεία φιλία), as the chief connection between the symbols (σύμβολα) and the gods, and the chief means by which union with the gods and, ultimately, the One is effected in theurgy.[160] Moreover, it is similar to Proclus' description of the soul's pre-ontological connection with the divine – the 'One of the Soul' or 'flower of intellect' – as a symbol (σύμβολον) of the One itself.[161]

The implications of Plotinus' description of union with the One here are vitally important: Plotinus states that the One is the cause and giver of love by which we approach him.[162] Furthermore, he indicates that the One is the ultimate cause not only of the final union but of *all* aspiration of the soul to higher reality.[163] These statements must qualify (at the very least) the oft-cited assertion that Iamblichus thought union with higher entities required divine aid while Plotinus held that union with superior entities required only the work of the human being, unaided by the divine. While there is a clear difference of emphasis in the extent of the divine aid envisaged, both philosophers think that the divine plays the ultimate role in union.

Thus, a clear parallel exists between the structural features and characteristics of Plotinus' interiorised, visualisation practices and the advanced, 'higher' stages of theurgy, where an 'incorporeal and immaterial' type of ritual is advocated. However, it might be objected (at least in terms of historical context) that Plotinus' successors were developing his 'pure' form of contemplation in a theurgic direction, rather than that Plotinus' own practices had derived from some pre-existent theurgic-type ritual. This is certainly possible, although the latter possibility must be considered, given that Plotinus' influence cannot account for the immaterial theurgy advocated in the *Chaldean Oracles*, which almost certainly predate him.[164] For example, Plotinus' use of mental or phantasmic symbols (σύμβολα) is foreshadowed by Fragment 2 of the *Chaldean Oracles* which exhorts the initiate

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158 Iamblichus, *DM* 7.4 (255.13–256.2) cited above.

159 Plotinus, *Enn*. VI.7.22.6–20; VI.7.23.1–5; Smith (1974), 102; Shaw (1998), 231–232; Mazur (2004), 48 and n. 66. Cf. also *Enn*. V.5.8.3–5; Rist (1964), 215.

160 Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 28–30.

161 Proclus, *Plat. Theol*. 1.25; *In Tim*. I.209-212; Rosán (1949), 212; Mazur (2004), 49, n.72.

162 Plotinus, *Enn*. VI.7.22.6–20; Smith (1974), 102.

163 Cf. Smith (1974), 102.

164 Cf. Mazur (2004), 49–50. On the question of whether Plotinus himself read the *Chaldean Oracles*: cf. p. 173, n. 9 above.

to visualise the token (σύνθημα) of the triad within the imaginative faculty.[165] Whether or not Plotinus derived his own interiorised ritual practices from a pre-existing theurgic-type tradition, which of course remains uncertain, 'the burden of proof appears to lie on those who would isolate Plotinus from this tradition.'[166]

Thus, given the structural parallels between Iamblichean theurgy and Plotinus' interiorised visualisation, we need to include Plotinus' praxis under the rubric of theurgy.[167] Furthermore, it is suggested that both the interiorised practices endorsed by Plotinus and the advanced, 'higher' stage of theurgy need to be conceived of as 'ritual', for both sets of practices aim directly to transform the consciousness of the practitioner rather than teaching him or her in a discursive sense. In this sense, these practices can be subsumed under the term 'inner ritual'. Thus it seems that the major difference between Plotinus and Iamblichus is in their valuation of the use of exterior, material objects as a tool to attain union with the divine. The reasons for this difference seem to relate to the psychological and metaphysical positions of Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus on the status of the human soul: Iamblichus' notion of the completely descended soul entails a more complete immersion in mortality and consequently the necessity of using material objects to attain the salvation of the soul.[168] While this is a significant difference, the similarities noted above suggest a difference of emphasis between the attitudes of the philosophers toward varied (that is, material and immaterial) types of ritual rather than a dichotomous opposition along the lines of 'rational' approach (Plotinus' contemplation) and 'irrational superstition' (Iamblichus' theurgy).

Rationality, Ritual and Divination: Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus on Astrology

Having explored the complex and subtle relationship between rationality and ritual in Neoplatonism, it remains important to consider the implications for Neoplatonic views of divination. Here, it will be useful to examine Plotinus'

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[165] *Chald. Or*. F2; F109; the term σύμβολον occurs in *Chald. Or*. F108; the term σύνθημα in F2 and F109. Mazur (2004), 50 and n. 76, points to specific verbal, terminological and conceptual parallels between the Chaldean exhortation and Plotinus, *Enn.* V.8.10.40–44; V.8.1.1–4.

[166] To cite from the conclusions of Mazur (2004), 51, whose arguments in this regard are well developed and convincing. Mazur also points to the more interiorised rituals of the *PGM*, where instructions are given for summoning the deity into the mind, consciousness or heart of the practitioner and the (potentially pre-Plotinian) use of internalised symbols and visualisation in the Hermetic and Sethian Gnostic sources (49–51).

[167] Following Shaw (1999), 121–143; Mazur (2003), 23–52; (2004), 29–55.

[168] As has been examined extensively by Shaw (1995); (1997), 177–190; (1998), 225–267.

attitude towards divination in comparison with that of Iamblichus. Plotinus did not write much about divination, aside from astrology – he clearly was not as interested in divination as either Porphyry or Iamblichus were. Yet, when Plotinus does mention oracles, for example, he speaks of them favourably. For instance, in his treatise *Against the Gnostics*, Plotinus speaks positively of oracles and their place in the cosmos: in his exhortation to the Gnostics that they should praise all the orders of the gods, he states that the encosmic gods '... declare in their oracles what is pleasing to the intelligible gods'. (καὶ χρῶσιν ἃ ἐκείνοις φίλα).[169] Moreover, Plotinus (like Iamblichus) accepts the traditional Greek categorisation of divination into two modes: inductive (or technical) and inspired, the latter of which involves divine possession.[170]

The type of divination discussed most by Plotinus was astrology; consequently, a comparison of Plotinus', Porphyry's and Iamblichus' views on astrology may well prove to be fruitful for examining how much difference of emphasis (in terms of their attitudes towards divination) there was between the philosophers. In the *Life of Plotinus*, Porphyry states that Plotinus investigated the 'casters of horoscopes' (γενεθλιαλόγοι) and found their results 'unreliable' (ἀνεχέγγυον).[171] Plotinus discusses astrology in two treatises, *On Whether the Stars are Causes* (*Ennead* II.3) and *On Destiny* (*Ennead* III.1).[172] In the latter treatise, Plotinus discusses astrology within the context of his critique of various theories of fate and causality, such as the Epicurean atomic notion of causality: he subsequently criticises the theory of 'others' who say that everything is caused by the universal motion of the heavens and the configurations and positions of the planets and stars towards one another, and consequently rely on predictions from them.[173] Plotinus evidently refers to astrology and astrologers here and criticises the notion that everything is caused by the planets and stars: although he admits that planets do contribute towards bodily temperaments, he explicitly denies that they determine the character and thoughts of an individual.[174]

In his later treatise *On Whether the Stars are Causes*, Plotinus' critique is much more specific in condemning the language of causality found in astrological manuals: he castigates those who claim that bodily temperament, ethical characteristics such as virtue and vice, and human actions are caused by the

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169 Plotinus, *Enn*. II.9.9.41–43.

170 Plotinus, *Enn*. III.1.3.13–16. As with Iamblichus' exposition of different modes of divination (see Chapter 7), Plotinus' categorisation matches that drawn in Plato, *Phdr.* 244c.

171 Porphyry, *Plot.* 15.22–26.

172 Plotinus, *On Destiny* (*Enn*. III.1) is an early treatise (chronologically, the third) while *On Whether the Stars are Causes* (*Enn*. II.3) is late (chronologically the fifty-second). For a detailed analysis of both treatises within the context of Hellenistic astrology, cf. Lawrence (2005), 17–31.

173 Plotinus, *Enn*. III.1.2.25–30. Cf. III.1.5.1–16.

174 Plotinus, *Enn*. III.1.6.4–11. Cf. Lawrence (2005), 20–22.

movements of the planets and stars; and criticises the notion that planets can be seen as 'bad' and 'good' and the idea that their positions relative to one another changes their disposition and gifts to humanity.[175] Plotinus questions whether the stars are with or without souls, postulating that if the planets are without souls, they only contribute heat. This causal contribution would thus only affect one's body; it could not determine the character, way of life or choices of an individual.[176] Plotinus does maintain that the motions of the heavens conform to the *logos* of the whole and do have some productive capacity, but for inessential changes. He counters the claim that the beings in the heavens make or cause everything below, with an appeal to the Forms and intelligible realities that are beyond the heavens.[177] If the planets are ensouled though, they have the power to make deliberate choices. Yet, their choices have nothing to do with decisions to act for good or evil that humans might face, for planets 'do not have what makes men evil' (Οὐδὲ γάρ, δι' ἃ ἀνθρωποι γίγνονται κακοί, ταῦτα ἐκείνοις ὑπάρχει).[178] As Lawrence concludes,

> Regardless of whether the planets are ensouled and have deliberate choice, the technical vocabulary of astrology leads Plotinus to believe that the theoretical position of astrologers is that planets are compelled by their places and figures. The astrological causality that he attacks in this work is one that places the planets themselves at the mercy of a system that compelled them to be affected and to do good or bad things.[179]

It is vital to note that Plotinus does not attack astrology as a type of divination *per se* but rather: (1) the determinism and fatalism that result from a view of the planets as subject to necessity and compulsion and, consequently, (2) the technical use of astrology by his contemporaries who hold such a deterministic view.[180] In

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[175] Plotinus, *Enn.* II.3.1. Cf. Lawrence (2005), 25–29. The language of causality attacked by Plotinus is to be found in contemporary (or earlier) astrological manuals and handbooks, such as Vettius Valens' *Anthology*.

[176] Plotinus, *Enn*. II.3.2.1–17. Plotinus seems to modify his earlier admission (in *Enn.* II.1) that the planets do have an effect on temperament with his comments in this treatise (II.3.2.5–11; II.3.12.1–3) that these physical effects are far too mixed when they reach the lower realm for any claims to identify them through knowledge of the configurations of the planets. Cf. Lawrence (2005), 27.

[177] Plotinus, *Enn.* II.3.13.10–17; 39-47; Lawrence (2005), 27.

[178] Plotinus, *Enn.* II.3.2.17–22. Cf. also II.3.3.22–25.

[179] Lawrence (2005), 28, also discusses the extent to which Plotinus' view of astrologers actually reflects their practices (28–29), concluding that it is uncertain but that astrologers such as Vettius Valens seem to use linguistic shortcuts in their work (using language of causality interchangeably with terminology relating to signifying).

[180] A caveat must be mentioned here: I am not arguing for or against the notion that astrology, as practised in Late Antiquity, was deterministic or fatalistic in the senses suggested

relation to his first criticism, it is important to note that Plotinus considers that the planets themselves are divine; consequently, his criticism centres on what he considers to be the faulty metaphysical notions employed by astrologers (i.e. that the planets are subject to necessity, a view contradicted by Plotinus' 'axiom of continuous hierarchy' as set out above).[181] Despite his attacks on astral causality and technical astrology, Plotinus accepts astral divination (which he links with the connected nature of the All) and thinks that the stars are the best signs for giving signs to those who are wise enough to read such celestial writing.[182] Although Plotinus does not explicitly specify how he envisages this type of astral divination being used, it is certainly clear that the future signified by planets and stars, the analogical writing in the sky, appears to be less deterministic than that of the astrologers.[183]

As with his views on divination and theurgy more broadly, Porphyry's views of astrology remain difficult to reconstruct, mostly due to the lack of survival of his relevant works. However, as we have seen, he was thoroughly familiar with, knowledgeable about and positive towards astrology, as evidenced by the astrological theory and Mithraic cosmography in *De antro nympharum*, his composition of an introduction to Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblos*, his positive citation of oracles utilising astrology in *Philosophy from Oracles* and his series of questions about astrology in the *Letter to Anebo*.[184] If Augustine's testimony is to be trusted, Porphyry also claimed that the planets, sun and stars are divine and are the immortal bodies of divine beings, a notion in accord with the views of both Plotinus and Iamblichus.[185] Porphyry may also have connected the soul vehicle with divinatory rituals which made use of astrology: he claimed that the soul vehicle was composed of a series of mixtures collected from the planets during its descent into the physical cosmos and when the human soul developed its full potential and ascended to the realm of *Nous* (or Divine Mind) it discarded its vehicle, which at this point is dissolved back into the heavenly spheres of the cosmos.[186] While much of Porphyry's theory remains difficult to reconstruct due to lack of evidence, his notion that the soul vehicle was composed of a series of mixtures

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by Plotinus. Yet this notion of astrological practice lies at the centre of his critique.

[181] Plotinus, *Enn.* II.3.2.18–19.

[182] Plotinus, *Enn.* II.3.7.1–14; III.1.6.19–25; Lawrence (2005), 29.

[183] Cf. Lawrence (2005), 29, who separates the astrology which Plotinus criticises from divination. Although I agree that the astrology criticised by Plotinus is obviously very different from the astral divination endorsed by him, it might be misleading to separate it entirely from 'divination' for it was clearly considered to be a type of 'inductive' divination in Antiquity: cf. Plotinus, *Enn*. III.1.13–16.

[184] Cf. Chapter 3, p. 118, nn. 170–172.

[185] Augustine, *City of God* 10.29.

[186] Proclus, *In Tim*. V.p.234.18–24 (311A) Diehl; Kissling (1922), 318; Finamore (1985), 11, 16–18.

collected from the planets surely has astrological connotations, since the crux of ancient astrological theory and praxis was the notion that each human being is made up of a portion of each of the planets; the *horoskopos*, the map of the native's birth, depicts the position of the planets and the fixed stars at the native's birth which were considered to reflect his essential character and attributes. In his now fragmentary treatise *On What is Up to Us*, Porphyry details the seven spheres (or planets) which souls pass through in their descent into a mortal body, each sphere inciting the soul with different desires.[187] This fragment helps to clarify Porphyry's position: if the soul was considered to be incited by desires through its contact with the planets during its descent, he presumably thought that these desires had to be shed, together with the soul vehicle, in the soul's return to *Nous*, which he often describes as necessarily involving a purification from human passions and desires. The possible implications of Porphyry's theory of the soul vehicle for the use of divinatory rituals using astrology have largely been unobserved by scholars and would be difficult to reconstruct from his fragmentary works. However, it is likely that Porphyry did discuss the role of the soul vehicle in ritual which also uses astrology as a form of divination, given the obvious connotations of his theory outlined above. That this is the case is further supported by his discussion of the use of astrology in ritual practices in the *Philosophy from Oracles*.[188]

Iamblichus' discussion of astrology and the nature of the planets bears some noticeable similarities to the views expressed by Plotinus and Porphyry: he also claims that the planets are divine and describes them as the visible bodies of the gods.[189] Like Plotinus, Iamblichus argues against the notion (which he explicitly attributes to astrologers) that some planets are good while others are bad, maintaining that all alike are good and causes of good.[190] In a similar sense to Plotinus, Iamblichus holds that effluences or potencies from the planets extend throughout the cosmos and realm of generation, although he seems to allow a greater role to these potencies in terms of possible human participation within them.[191] However, this is further qualified by his notion that the way in which human beings receive them depends upon their receptivity, as well as on the process of participation itself and on the intermingling of material elements with immaterial emanations.[192] Iamblichus' main discussion of astrology occurs as a by-product of an exploration of the nature of the personal *daimon*.[193] Porphyry had questioned whether the personal *daimon* could be discovered through the 'master

[187] Smith (1993), 271F, lines 68–71.

[188] Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 104–106; 117–118; 120–124.

[189] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.17 (50.13–51.52.12); 1.18 (52.13–14); 1.19 (57.5–58.7).

[190] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.18 (53.1–53.4; 54.10–12); Plotinus, *Enn.* II.3.2.17–22; II.3.3. 22–25.

[191] Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 1.18 (53.4–9; 54.5–9; 55.3–10).

[192] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.18 (54.12–56.8).

[193] Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 9; Addey (2007a), 35–57.

of the house', that is by discovering the ruler of the horoscope.[194] In response to this inquiry, Iamblichus claims that there are two possible approaches for the discovery of the personal *daimon*: one is theurgic, summoning the *daimon* from higher causal principles, operating on a universal basis and transcending the realms of nature – this type makes no use of horoscopes. The other approach is that of technical astrology, which operates on an individual level in the realm of nature, using horoscopes and resorting to the visible realms of generation.[195] Iamblichus considers this technical astrology to be a form of inductive divination and clearly inferior to the use of theurgic divination, for he states that divine divination (theurgic divination) can teach us about the stars on the truest principles, while the technical art uses the 'computation of tables' which theurgists do not need.[196] Iamblichus asserts that theurgic divination offers greater facilities than technical astrology for the discovery of the personal *daimon*, for there are principles for its discovery which are more universal than the 'master of the house' and the *daimon* stands as a model for the soul before it even descends into generation.[197] Although Iamblichus is somewhat reticent regarding the ways in which theurgic divination can identify or discover the personal *daimon*, he does state that theurgic rituals invoke the god who is the ruler of the *daimones* and who has apportioned a personal *daimon* to each individual, and this ruler god reveals the personal *daimon* to each theurgist during the course of the ritual.[198] In a general sense, although Iamblichus criticises the 'technical' procedures of astrologers in the specific process of discovering the personal *daimon*, he nevertheless maintains the truth of astrology (at least, to a certain extent) and notes as proof that the Chaldeans and the Egyptians have preserved records of celestial phenomena down the ages.[199]

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[194] Iamblichus, *DM* 9.1 (272.12–273.2); 9.2 (274.1–7), where Iamblichus states that Porphyry also questions the efficacy of astrology. Cf. also 9.3 (276.7–10); 9.5 (278.12–279.1).

[195] Iamblichus, *DM* 9.1 (273.2–8).

[196] On the distinction between theurgic and technical divination, as well as between inspired and inductive modes of divination, see Chapter 7, pp. 240–243; 264–266; Iamblichus, *DM* 9.3 (276.13–15).

[197] Iamblichus, *DM* 9.5 (279.10–16); on the derivation of the personal *daimon* from the whole cosmos: cf. *DM* 9.6 (280.1–10); 9.7 (281.6–8). Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell (2003), 337, n. 476, note that this line of argument is only apparent if it is recognised that the personal *daimon* is the personification of the sum total of the astral and planetary influences upon us. Cf. also Athanassiadi (1993), 121.

[198] Iamblichus, *DM* 9.9 (283.13–284.7).

[199] Iamblichus, *DM* 9.4 (278.1–11); *contra* Athanassiadi (1993) 121, who suggests that Iamblichus here refers to the science of astronomy rather than astrology. This distinction may be anachronistic for in Antiquity the term μαθηματική was used interchangeably to refer to both astronomy and astrology which were never strictly separated, as in the modern context. Furthermore, Iamblichus' claims that the Egyptians and the Hermetic system include astrology, although only as a small part and as the lowest element in their account of

Given that Iamblichus envisages the Chaldeans and Egyptians as the paradigmatic practitioners of the hieratic art, it seems that he conceives of astrology as an important part of theurgy in some sense.[200] It seems likely that theurgic rituals were carried out at specific times calculated astrologically as particularly appropriate for invoking a specific deity or set of deities: this is implicit in Iamblichus' claim that the Egyptians recommend ascent through theurgy to the regions which are more universal than fate by observing the critical time for action (καιρός), a clear reference to katarchic astrology.[201]

Overall then, there is a great deal of similarity in Plotinus' and Iamblichus' attitudes towards astrology. Both criticise contemporary astrologers and astrology as conventionally practised by contemporary practitioners on the basis that their methods are technical, overly predictive and deterministic.[202] Furthermore, both suggest a similar critique of contemporary astrological methods based on their metaphysical notions: Plotinus criticises astrologers for their view of the planets as subject to necessity or compulsion (that is, for treating the planets as subject to human beings in the realm of generation), while Iamblichus similarly criticises astrologers for operating purely within the realm of generation and nature. Both critiques are based on Platonic notions of the immutability of the divine, for both see the planets as divine in some sense, as does Porphyry. Furthermore, there may well be a parallel between Iamblichus' endorsement of a theurgic approach to astrology and Plotinus' approval of astral divination, in which the stars are envisaged as a kind of celestial writing. While Plotinus links this astral divination with the nature of the All, his assertion that only the wise can read this celestial writing points towards a type of divination more profound and less deterministic than purely divinatory inductive methods. Meanwhile, Iamblichus notes that the signs scattered throughout the cosmos preserve a 'trace' (ἴχνος) and an 'image' (εἴδωλόν) of 'divine divination', suggesting at least some convergence between theurgic approaches towards astral phenomena as a means of divination and Plotinus' notion of astral divination.[203]

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the causes of the cosmos, further challenges this view, for Iamblichus clearly sees astrology as part of the Egyptian religious tradition: cf. *DM* 8.4 (266.1–8).

[200] Cf. Shaw (2007a), 89–102, for some excellent suggestions regarding the precise nature of 'astral theurgy'.

[201] Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 105–106; Iamblichus, *DM* 8.4 (267.6–10).

[202] Cf. Athanassiadi (1993), 121.

[203] Cf. Chapter 7, p. 251; Iamblichus, *DM* 3.27 (164.8–9; 11–12).

Conclusion

The relationship between rationality and ritual as envisaged within Neoplatonism is subtle and complex. A rigid dichotomy is often applied by scholars to differentiate firmly between the 'philosophical contemplation' (θεωρία) endorsed by Plotinus and Porphyry and the theurgy (θεουργία) of Iamblichus and his successors. Yet this dichotomy is based on post-Enlightenment constructions of ritual, which rely on thought–action/mind–body dichotomies. According to this model, religious ritual is held to be the absolute antithesis of philosophical rationality. Drawing on the recent critiques formulated by postcolonial theorists and scholars of religion, we have seen that these models are often unhelpful when attempting to understand the place of ritual within Neoplatonism and the stances of Neoplatonist philosophers towards ritual practices; moreover, such models have often served to obscure or distort ancient attitudes towards theurgy and its relation with contemplation. While there are certainly clear differences in the attitudes of Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus towards ritual, it is misleading to describe these as more than differences of emphasis. The modern dichotomy established between rationality and ritual can only be applied anachronistically to theurgy and Neoplatonism. Focusing on Iamblichus' exposition of theurgy in *De Mysteriis*, and Plotinus' notion of 'contemplation' (θεωρία) and his conception of mystical union with the One, I have suggested that these phenomena share significant structural similarities and characteristics and therefore are much more similar than previously recognised. Both Iamblichus' notion of the 'intellectual and incorporeal' theurgy and Plotinus' conception of mystical union with the One need to be conceived of as 'ritual'. Plotinus' visualisation exercises and conception of mystical union involve attempts to directly transform the consciousness of the philosopher so as to allow union with superior entities. Meanwhile, contemplation and noetic vision are held to play important roles in theurgy by Iamblichus. Furthermore, theurgy (and particularly theurgic divination) is considered to involve the attainment of supra-rational cognitive states, with supra-rationality envisaged as marking both the culmination and the transcendence of rationality. Given these significant points, a more subtle and nuanced conception of ritual needs to be developed, so that the subtleties of Neoplatonic attitudes towards religious phenomena may emerge fully. The use of the term 'inner ritual' to describe interiorised visualisation or contemplative practices, particularly those which utilise noetic symbols, may well serve as an initial step in delineating certain types of Neoplatonic ritual manifestations.[204] Furthermore, close study of Neoplatonic notions of the 'vehicle of the soul' (ὄχημα πνεῦμα), a median entity (neither completely material nor immaterial) which was considered to mediate between the material body and

[204] In doing so, I follow the recent research of Mazur (2003); (2004), to whom I am indebted within this chapter.

the completely immaterial soul, may well help to expand and articulate nuanced models of ritual which are more appropriate for any examination of Neoplatonic ritual. When the attitudes of Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus towards ritual are examined without recourse to post-Enlightenment models of ritual (based on a rigid dichotomy between thought and action), a much more interlinked set of conceptions of ritual emerges, based on similar metaphysical, cosmological and ethical notions, such as the 'axiom of continuous hierarchy', the immutability of the divine, the need for intellectual and ethical preparations on the part of the practitioner and the gradual progression towards interiorisation and detachment from generation. From this perspective, Neoplatonic attitudes towards divination become clearer and easier to assess, compare and contrast. An important caveat must be made here: I fully recognise that there are obvious differences between Plotinus and Porphyry on the one hand, and Iamblichus on the other, most notably in their valuation of the use of material objects in their quest for union with the divine; however, these differences are a matter of emphasis rather than delineating completely distinct and unrelated phenomena.

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Chapter 6

Divine Inspiration, Possession and Contact with the Gods in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*

Among the Neoplatonists, the most extensive, surviving discussion of the nature of divine inspiration (ἐνθουσιασμός; ἐπίπνοια) and possession (θεοφορία; κατοκωχή), the process of consulting oracles, the nature and operation of oracles and, in a wider sense, the phenomenon of divination (μαντική) occurs in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* 3.[1] As a response to Porphyry's request for a clear description of 'what happens in predicting the future' (τί τὸ γιγνόμενόν ἐστιν ἐν τῇ τοῦ μέλλοντος προγνώσει), Iamblichus' exposition centres on what causes divine inspiration and divination and their possible classification.[2] He offers a typology of diverse types of divination, categorising them into 'inspired' and 'inductive' modes. Using this typology, Iamblichus classifies oracles and certain types of dream divination (*oneiromancy*) as 'inspired' divination, but also discusses the nature and operation of various types of inductive divination, such as augury.[3] By using this traditional Greek system of classification (of divination), he presents a view of 'inspired' modes of divination as caused by (at least in a partial sense) and based on states of divine inspiration and possession. Given that Iamblichus values 'inspired' modes of divination more than inductive types and views the former as the basis for the use of divination within theurgy, it seems important to undertake a comprehensive examination of Iamblichus' views of the states of divine inspiration and possession and the way in which these states fit in with his broader views on the nature of contact with the gods.[4] Iamblichus identifies three cumulative types of contact with the gods – participation (μετουσία), communion (κοινωνία) and union (ἕνωσις) – which operate whenever communication is established between humans and the gods, such as in prayer and sacrifice, as well as in divine inspiration, possession and divination.[5]

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[1] Iamblichus also discusses divination in *DM* 6 and 10: see Chapter 7, pp. 248–250; 264–266; 269–273.

[2] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.1 (99.9–10).

[3] Oracles of Delphi, Didyma and Claros: *DM* 3.11; Dream Divination: 3.2–3; 'inductive' types of divination: 3.15–17.

[4] Iamblichus' valuation of different modes of divination and the role of inspired divination within theurgy: see Chapter 7, pp. 240–243; 264–275.

[5] Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 3.5 (111.10–13); 5.26 (238.6). These three stages of contact or connection are also used by Iamblichus (*DM* 5.26 (237.12–238.5)) to characterise the three

Meanwhile, Iamblichus' views of divination are based on three key axioms, the first two of which are cosmological and metaphysical, and the third psychological: (1) the simultaneous transcendence and immanence of the gods, the latter of which (that is, immanence) is characterised through the idiom of divine illumination; (2) a conceptual framework of a hierarchical, multiple schema of causation, with multiple causes conceptualised as operating *simultaneously*; and (3) a theory of the receptivity of the prophet(ess), ritual practitioner or theurgist, which is envisaged as being developable through ritual, ethical and intellectual means. The first and third axioms are particularly important for understanding Iamblichean views of divine inspiration and possession and will be examined in this chapter.[6]

The Relationship between Divine Inspiration, Possession and Oracles

Iamblichus' comments on divine inspiration and possession form the basis and foundation for his views of inspired divination, particularly oracles. This is because divine inspiration is the phenomenon experienced by the prophet(ess) (μάντις) which causes him or her to prophesy; in a direct sense, divine inspiration and possession inform μαντική.[7] Iamblichus' claim that those who are inspired or possessed do not use their sense perception but instead have submitted their own life to the gods as a 'vehicle' (ὄχημα) or 'instrument' (ὄργανον) echoes Plato's *Ion*, which also postulates a view of divine inspiration as entailing total possession which overrides the sense perception of the initiate.[8] Furthermore, Iamblichus' assertion that divine inspiration does not come from *daimones*, but from the gods, also alludes to Plato's *Ion*, where the same assertion is made against the common view that inspiration was solely daimonic.[9] Iamblichus' concept of divine inspiration as total possession by the gods is also identical to the concept of 'prophetic madness' expressed in Plato's *Phaedrus*: it is sent directly by the gods as the 'greatest of goods' (τὰ μέγιστα τῶν ἀγαθῶν) to humans and Plato gives the examples of the Pythia at Delphi and the priestesses at Dodona, who were completely possessed by the god when they gave oracles.[10] Like Plato, Iamblichus

cumulative stages of prayer – introductory (συναγωγόν), conjunctive (κοινωνίας) and that characterised by ineffable union (ἡ ἄρρητος ἕνωσις). Cf. Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell (2003), 275, n. 355; Dillon (1973; repr. 2009), 407–411; Addey (2012), 133–150. On the inextricable links between sacrifice and prayer see *DM* 5.26 (237.6–10; 238.9–12; 239.10–240.8).

6 The second axiom will be examined in Chapter 7, pp. 240; 243–250.

7 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.27 (167.3–4); 3.8 (115.12–116.3); 3.10 (120.11–12); Sheppard (1993), 140, notes this important link between *DM* 3.4 and 3.11.

8 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.4 (109.11); 3.1 (101.2–6); 3.7 (115.4–5); 3.11 (125.9); 3.14 (132.10); Shaw (1995), 8; Plato, *Ion* 534c–d.

9 Plato, *Ion* 536c; Iamblichus, *DM* 3.7 (114.7–8).

10 Plato, *Phdr.* 244a8–b3, trs. Fowler (1914; repr. 1982). Cf. Sheppard (1993), 139–140.

links the idea of total possession by the gods and divine inspiration with oracles and the oracular prophet(ess). *De Mysteriis* 3.4 (on divine inspiration) and 3.11 (on oracles) clearly demonstrate that Iamblichus' conception of inspiration is not only the same as Plato's, but also a traditional Greek conception.[11] Indeed, Iamblichus consciously links his discussion of inspiration with the preceding philosophical tradition by using various well-known phrases: Plato's θεία μανία (divine madness) and Heraclitus' μαινομένῳ στόματι (frenzied mouth).[12] Thus Iamblichus' views on divine inspiration, while appropriate and consistent for the theurgist, follow the Greek philosophical tradition, especially Plato's concept of 'prophetic madness' in the *Phaedrus* and the concept of 'divine inspiration' expressed in the *Ion*.

Preliminary Observations on Divine Inspiration and Possession

Iamblichus uses various terms to denote divine possession and inspiration, including ἐνθουσιασμός, θεοφορία and ἐπίπνοια, which are generally translated as 'divine inspiration', while κατοκωχή in the passive sense means 'held' or 'owned' and is akin to the English term 'possessed'. Iamblichus generally uses these terms interchangeably and does not treat 'divine possession' and 'inspiration' as distinct states.[13] However, his claim that 'the manner of inspiration in its different alterations makes the divine possession also different' (ὁ τρόπος τῶν ἐνθουσιασμῶν παραλλάττων ποιεῖ καὶ τὴν θεοφορίαν ἑτέραν), suggests that these terms can sometimes be applied to the same phenomenon but as viewed from different perspectives: 'inspiration' (ἐνθουσιασμός) is sometimes applied specifically to the phenomenon as described from a transcendent perspective (that is, from above or 'top-down'; the pure illumination of the gods) while 'possession' (θεοφορία) can sometimes be applied specifically to the phenomenon as viewed from a human perspective (that is, from below or 'bottom-up'; the experience of the human ritual practitioner).[14] Iamblichus also claims that cults of different deities produce different kinds of possession states and experiences.[15] He includes an extensive discussion of the diverse types of possession produced in initiates by Dionysus, Pan and Cybele, as well as the possession of the Corybantian initiates.[16]

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[11] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.4; 3.11; Sheppard (1993), 140, 142; Dodds (1951), 68–75; 87, n. 41.

[12] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.8 (117.1), echoing Plato, *Phdr.* 244a; *DM* 3.8 (117.6), echoing Heraclitus, F92 d–k, which describes the Pythia. Cf. Sheppard (1993), 140–142.

[13] Sheppard (1993), 138–139; Clarke (2001), 70, 86, n. 1.

[14] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.5 (111.6–7).

[15] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.5 (111.3–7).

[16] Dionysus: *DM* 3.9 (118.5–6), 3.10 (123.2–5); Pan: 3.10 (122.4–5); Cybele: 3.10 (121.11–122.3); the Korybantes: 3.10 (121.7–8). Iamblichus uses these cults as key

Once again, he alludes to Plato's account of divine inspiration in the *Ion*, which also refers to the Corybantian and Dionysiac initiates. Socrates argues that Ion is inspired solely by Homer (a case of poetic inspiration) and makes an analogy with the Corybantes: the Corybantian initiates are inspired by their god alone, just as Ion is inspired by Homer alone.[17] Plato's statement implies that different deities produce diverse types of inspiration, a notion further elaborated by Iamblichus.

Divine inspiration and possession are examined initially from a theoretical perspective in 3.4–8.[18] Iamblichus quotes Porphyry, who argues that those who are divinely inspired and apprehend the future often do so in a waking state, and so they act and operate with their sense-perception. He also suggests a contradiction, since at the same time they are not conscious of themselves as they were before, perhaps implying that they have an inferior state of awareness.[19] Iamblichus' response emphasises that those who are truly possessed by the gods do not act according to sense-perception, and they are not conscious of themselves in the sense of using their personal knowledge or experience.[20] To prove his point, Iamblichus gives a list of 'evidence' or 'characteristic signs' (τὰ τεκμήρια) which demonstrate that those who are possessed do not utilise normal human consciousness or sensation. These signs involve anaesthesia and resistance to injury.[21] Many of them are not burned even when fire is applied to them on account of their divine inspiration; those who are burned do not react 'because at this time they are not living the life of an animate being' (διότι οὐ τὴν τοῦ ζῴου ζωὴν ζῶσι τηνικαῦτα) and many who are pierced with spits, struck on the back with axes or cut with knives do not feel it at all.[22] Self-harming with knives was a well-known feature of the Corybantic rites, which Iamblichus saw as an exemplary cult of divine possession.[23] He ends his list of examples as follows:

> Αἵ τε ἐνέργειαι αὐτῶν οὐδαμῶς εἰσιν ἀνθρώπιναι· τά τε γὰρ ἄβατα βατὰ γίγνεται θεοφορούμενα, καὶ εἰς πῦρ φέρονται καὶ πῦρ διαπορεύονται καὶ ποταμοὺς διαπερῶσιν, ὥσπερ ἡ ἐν Κασταβάλλοις ἱέρεια.' Ἀπὸ δὲ τούτων δείκνυται ὡς οὐ παρακολουθοῦσιν ἑαυτοῖς

examples of different types of possession, rather than postulating that they constitute an exhaustive account, because Porphyry had asked specifically about these cults (although he asked about Sabazios, whom Iamblichus equates with Dionysus): Porphyry, *Letter to Anebo* in Iamblichus, *DM* 3.9 (117.10–118.1).

17 Plato, *Ion* 536c.

18 Cf. Sheppard (1993), 138–143, for a comprehensive discussion of *DM* 3.4–8.

19 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.4 (109.6–9).

20 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.4 (109.1–110.3).

21 Cf. Clarke (2001), 77, who cites modern psychological reports which detail similar phenomena.

22 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.4 (110.4–9). Cf. Shaw (1995), 82–83; Clarke (2001), 77.

23 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.9 (117.10–118.1); 3.10 (121.7–8); Clarke (2001), 77.

> ἐνθουσιῶντες, καὶ ὅτι οὔτε τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην οὔτε τὴν τοῦ ζῴου ζωὴν ζῶσι, κατ' αἴσθησιν ἢ ὁρμήν, ἄλλην δέ τινα θειοτέραν ζωὴν ἀνταλλάσσονται, ἀφ' ἧς ἐπιπνέονται καὶ ἀφ' ἧς τελέως κατέχονται.
>
> Their actions are in no way human, because what is inaccessible becomes accessible under divine possession: they cast themselves into fire and they walk through fire, and they walk over rivers like the priestess at Kastabala. From these examples it is clear that those who are inspired have no consciousness of themselves, and they lead neither the life of a human being nor of a living animal so far as concerns sensation or appetite, but they exchange their life for another more divine life, by which they are inspired, and by which they are completely possessed.[24]

Iamblichus' concept of divine inspiration rests on two central points: (1) the recipient is wholly possessed by the gods and (2) consequently, he or she does not act or experience in a human manner using sense perception.[25] Does this mean that the inspired individual has no consciousness at all, according to Iamblichus? A common conception in anthropological scholarship is that all cases of possession necessitate the complete expulsion of the host individual out of their own body by a wholly alien agency.[26] According to Iamblichus, it is not the case that the recipient has no consciousness at all, though: the central point is that the inspired individual is not conscious of anything else *except the gods*.[27] As Clarke has noted, 'the human individual is eclipsed, not annihilated, by the divine force'.[28] Iamblichus repeatedly emphasises the fact that those who are possessed exchange their human life for a divine life.[29] According to Iamblichus, inspiration is emphatically not a transport of the mind, for the mind is not carried or swept away during the experience of true possession.[30] Rather the human individual consciousness is

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[24] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.4 (110.9– 11.2). Cf. *DM* 3.6 (113.5–114.2); Shaw (1995), 82–83.

[25] Cf. Clarke (2001), 77.

[26] Cf. for example, De Heusch (1962), 129–133; Lewis (1971; repr. 2003), 40.

[27] Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 1.10 (34.6–35.6), which examines 'the least of divine beings', the soul pure from contact with body which does not 'have need of the experiences which control sense-perception, for it is not at all confined within a body' (οὐδὲ τῶν προηγουμένων τῆς αἰσθήσεως παθημάτων προσδεῖται, οὐδὲ γὰρ ὅλως ἐν σώματι κατέχεται...).

[28] Clarke (2001), 83.

[29] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.4 (109.10–13; 110.9–111.2). Cf. also 8.7 (270.10–14); 8.8 (272.1–4); Shaw (1998), 248.

[30] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.7 (114.5–8): 'So, then, it [divine possession] is falsely believed to be a transport of the mind by daemonic inspiration. For the human intellect is neither carried away if it is really possessed, nor does inspiration come from daemons, but from the gods.' (Φορὰ μὲν οὖν τῆς διανοίας μετὰ δαιμονίας ἐπιπνοίας ψευδῶς δοξάζεται. Οὔτε γὰρ ἡ διάνοια ἡ ἀνθρωπίνη φέρεται, εἴ γε ὄντως κατέχεται, οὔτε δαιμόνων, θεῶν δὲ γίγνεται ἐπίπνοια.).

replaced or enhanced by a kind of super consciousness. Iamblichus implies that the degree of connection to or contact with the god, as well as the extent to which the prophet(ess) or theurgist remembers the possession experience, depends partially on their cultivation of their receptivity (ἐπιτηδειότης). Iamblichus' specific conceptions of this process will be explored further below.

Possession and Ecstatic Trance

Many scholars now associate possession states with ecstatic trance. Indeed, this was often thought to be the case in Graeco-Roman religious tradition and Iamblichus too accords a role to ecstasy in possession states, but he is keen to emphasise that divine possession is not simply the same as ecstasy (ἔκστασις):

> Ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἔκστασις ἁπλῶς οὕτως ἐστίν, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τὸ κρεῖττον ἀναγωγὴ καὶ μετάστασις, ἡ δὲ παραφορὰ καὶ ἔκστασις ἐμφαίνει καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον ἀνατροπήν. Ἔτι τοίνυν ὁ τοῦτο ἀποφαινόμενος λέγει μέν τι περὶ τῶν συμβεβηκότων περὶ τοὺς ἐνθουσιῶντας, οὐ μέντοι τὸ προηγούμενον ἀναδιδάσκει. Ἔστι δὲ τοῦτο τὸ κατέχεσθαι ὅλους αὐτοὺς ὑπὸ τοῦ θείου, ᾧ ἐπακολουθεῖ ὕστερον καὶ τὸ ἐξίστασθαι.
>
> Yet it [i.e. divine possession] is not even ecstasy pure and simple, but an exaltation and transference to what is superior, whereas frenzy and ecstasy actually reveal a perversion toward what is inferior. Still more, the one who represents this ecstasy says something about the incidental feature of those who are inspired, but does not put his finger on the main point. *That is*, *they themselves are wholly possessed by the divine*, *the consequence of which is ecstasy*. [my emphasis] [31]

Iamblichus is not simply opposing inspiration to ecstasy, but rather saying that ecstasy is only a symptom and consequence of possession, not proof of its occurrence, and may sometimes occur through human actions.[32] Thus, in Iamblichus' schema, an individual exhibiting the traits commonly conceived as 'ecstasy' (ἔκστασις) could be in a state of divine possession, but they could alternatively be experiencing a state such as drunkenness or madness. Ecstasy is thus not a defining characteristic of possession, but only a symptom of possession in some cases. This is reinforced by Iamblichus' explicit rejection of the idea that possession is identical or similar to the ecstatic state caused by drunkenness or madness: the latter states are purely human and they divert the human to inferior

[31] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.7 (114.8–13).
[32] Shaw (1998), 249–250; Clarke (2001), 75.

states which are contrary to nature, whereas divine possession is superior to nature and leads the human being to be united with divine entities which are superior.[33]

Simultaneous Divine Descent and Human Ascent

Iamblichus' discussion of divine possession and inspiration is paradoxical: the human soul rises to the gods while *simultaneously* the gods descend to the human soul to possess it. Iamblichus argues that divine possession involves the human agent subsuming their consciousness to that of the gods, so that their soul is possessed by the divine. Thus the human soul, while possessed, sees through the eyes of a deity. Crucially, however, this is only possible because the soul contains a pre-ontological connection to the divine: Iamblichus states 'earthly things, possessing their being in virtue of the totalities of the gods, whenever they come to be ready for participation in the divine, straight away find the gods pre-existing in it prior to their own proper essence' (τὰ δ' ἐπὶ γῆς ἐν τοῖς πληρώμασι τῶν θεῶν ἔχοντα τὸ εἶναι, ὁπόταν ἐπιτήδεια πρὸς τὴν θείαν μετοχὴν γένηται, εὐθὺς ἔχει πρὸ τῆς οἰκείας ἑαυτῶν οὐσίας προϋπάρχοντας ἐν αὐτῇ τοὺς θεούς).[34] Iamblichus is not generally explicit regarding the simultaneous ascent of the soul with the descent of the gods in possession rituals. This is because he is so concerned to emphasise the divine as the ultimate and primary cause of divine possession.[35] However, as we have seen, he delineates some of the key features of possession in explicit contrast to ecstatic states caused by drunkenness and madness. He maintains that:

> Δεῖ τοίνυν ἐξ ἀρχῆς διελέσθαι διχῇ τὰ εἴδη τῆς ἐκστάσεως... καὶ τὰ μὲν παρὰ φύσιν, τὰ δ' ὑπὲρ τὴν φύσιν· καὶ τὰ μὲν καταγωγὰ ψυχῆς, τὰ δ' ἀναγωγά. καὶ τὰ μὲν διίστησιν ἔξω παντάπασι τῆς θείας μοίρας, τὰ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὴν συνάπτει.
>
> It is thus necessary initially to distinguish two forms of ecstasy ... one is contrary to nature [i.e. ecstatic states caused by drunkenness and madness], the other superior to nature [i.e. divine possession]; one causes the descent of the soul, *the*

[33] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.25 (158.6–159.4); Shaw (1995), 234–235; (2003a), 56–57, makes the important observation that 'ὑπερφύης is accurately translated as "supernatural", but the Iamblichean supernatural should not be confused with its later Christian expression. As a Pythagorean, Iamblichus' ὑπερφύης was never removed from nature but was invisibly present in it as its principle. Indeed, material nature is rooted in the immaterial even as it unfolds its powers into temporal reality' (57, n. 19).

[34] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.8 (29.1–3).

[35] Cf. Chapter 7, pp. 240–241.

> *other its ascent; and one separates it [i.e. the soul] wholly apart from participation in the divine, while the other unites it to it* [my emphasis].[36]

It may be instructive to examine how this paradoxical situation of simultaneous divine descent and human ascent occurs, according to Iamblichus. The philosopher describes states of divine possession which occur in cults where musical instruments (such as pipes, cymbals and tambourines) are used to encourage or induce a state of receptivity in the human being. In explaining the reasons for the use of music in these possession rituals, Iamblichus maintains that the harmony and rhythm of the music which induce the state of possession do not primarily belong to the soul. Rather, they are a reflection of the divine harmony; they are infused and permeated with divinity. The soul bears a memory of the divine harmony which it heard before incarnating in a human body; in this sense, the soul is closely allied with the divine harmony.[37] Iamblichus' theory is based on the Platonic theory of Recollection: Plato had discussed the way in which the human soul travelled in the train of the gods and glimpsed the divine realm before descending into a body in the physical world.[38] While Iamblichus is concerned to emphasise the ultimate importance of the divine as the primary cause of the possession, the soul's memory of the divine harmony and its receptivity to the trace of the divine harmony (τὸ θεῖον ἴχνος τῆς ἁρμονίας) act as an 'ascent' allowing the soul to receive the inspiration of the deity.

Divine Descent and Illumination

It is clear that Iamblichus' conception of the 'descent' of the divine is not to be taken literally as implying a descent in physical, spatial terms. Rather, he conceptualises the divine as giving off emanations which eternally illuminate the whole of the physical world with no diminution. This notion was common to Neoplatonist philosophers. They compared this process to the light of the sun whose rays light up external phenomena without any kind of detraction.[39] This idea clarifies Iamblichus' frequent descriptions of divine manifestation and power in terms of illumination. John Finamore notes that, 'Iamblichus defends the view that although the gods are superior to us and exist separately, they illuminate this realm with their light. It is this light that allows the gods' presence in this lower world.'[40] For Iamblichus then, the divine illuminates the whole world perpetually: *divine illumination is the idiom through which Iamblichus iterates the gods' immanence*.

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[36] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.25 (158.8–9; 159.2–4).

[37] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.9 (120.3–10). Cf. also Iamblichus, *VP* 15.64–66.

[38] Plato, *Phdr.* 250b–251a; *Resp.* 402a.

[39] Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 1.9 (30.9–31.8); Johnston (2008), 47.

[40] Finamore (1999), 87. Cf. also Johnston (2008), 47, and especially Finamore (1993), 55–64.

The divine is primarily located in the divine realm (and is thus transcendent) but is simultaneously manifested throughout the physical cosmos. The idea of the simultaneous transcendence and immanence of the gods forms the central foundation of Iamblichus' cosmology and religious conceptions:

> οὔτε γὰρ οἱ θεοὶ κρατοῦνται ἔν τισι τοῦ κόσμου μέρεσιν, οὔτε τὰ περὶ γῆν ἄμοιρα αὐτῶν καθέστηκεν.' Αλλ' οἱ μὲν κρείττονες ἐν αὐτῷ, ὡς ὑπὸ μηδενὸς περιέχονται, περιέχουσι πάντα ἐν ἑαυτοῖς·
>
> For neither is it the case that the gods are confined to certain parts of the cosmos, nor is the earthly realm devoid of them. On the contrary, it is true of the superior beings in it that, even as they are not contained by anything, so they contain everything within themselves ...[41]

According to the philosopher, the gods are transcendent in a causal and ontological sense: they exist in a superior, eternal realm and so do not 'move' from one location to another, as a partial and temporal being such as a human soul does. However, through their causal superiority and power, the gods are also immanent throughout the lower world, the material cosmos, through their divine illumination which permeates all things, even material objects.[42] This notion of divine illumination is dependent upon the concepts of divine love (θεία φιλία) and sympathy (συμπάθεια) and encapsulates the idea of an animated cosmos, permeated by providential divinity. The 'descent' of the divine refers to this process of emanation or illumination and also implicitly refers to the superiority of the divine in a causal sense. Iamblichus frequently states that divine illumination and divination comes from 'without' (ἔξωθεν): this refers to the gods' transcendence and causal power rather than to the outside world.[43]

Iamblichus consistently maintains that the divine illumination which enables theurgic divination and ascent is caused by and sent from the gods as an expression of their divine will and love.[44] Because of divine will, love and providence, the gods unceasingly shed their illumination on humans and orchestrate the union of theurgists with the divine; this union is considered to be a gift of the gods.[45]

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[41] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.8 (28.11–29.1).

[42] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.12 (128.8–129.11). Cf. also 1.8 (27.7–28.10); 1.9 (31.9–32.6); 5.23 (232.9–12).

[43] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.23 (155.12–156.2).

[44] *DM* 1.12 (40.14–41.8). Cf. also 3.14 (132.9–133.3; 134.10–15); 5.9 (209.9–11).

[45] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.18 (143.14–144.3); 3.20 (149.4–150.2); 3.23 (156.1–2); 4.1 (181.6–9); 5.9 (209.9–11); 5.10 (211.10–14); 5.25 (236.1–8); 5.26 (238.6–9; 240.3–6). Cf. *VP* 1.1–2 on Pythagorean philosophy as a gift of the gods which can only be understood by humans with the assistance of the gods; Shaw (1995), 51; 92–93; 141; Finamore (1999), 87; 90; Feichtinger (2003), 133.

In response to Porphyry's questions regarding the role of the gods within the operation of divination, Iamblichus repeatedly insists that the divine power of illumination is never controlled by human beings, but is *ultimately* caused by the goodness of the gods:

> Ἔπειτα ἀπορεῖς εἰ ἄχρι τοσούτου κατάγεται εἰς ὑπηρεσίαν ἀνπρώπων τὸ θεῖον ὡς μὴ ὀκνεῖν τινας καὶ ἀλφιτομάντεις εἶναι. Τὸ δὲ οὐ καλῶς ὑπολαμβάνεις, τὴν περιουσίαν τῆς δυνάμεως τῶν θεῶν καὶ τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν ἀγαθότητα καὶ τὴν πάντα περιέχουσαν αἰτίαν κηδεμονίαν τε ἡμῶν καὶ προστασίαν ὑπηρεσίαν ἐπονομάζων. Καὶ ἔτι ἀγνοεῖς τὸν τρόπον τῆς ἐνεργείας, ὥστε οὐ καθέλκεται οὔτε ἐπιστρέφεται οὗτος εἰς ἡμᾶς, χωριστὸς δὲ προηγεῖται καὶ δίδωσι μὲν τοῖς μετέχουσιν ἑαυτόν, αὐτὸς δὲ οὔτε ἐξίσταται ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ οὔτε ἐλάττων γίγνεται οὔθ' ὑπηρετεῖ τοῖς μετέχουσιν, ἀλλὰ τοὐναντίον πᾶσιν ὑπηρετοῦσι προσχρῆται.
>
> Then you raise the question whether the divine is brought down for the service of human beings, to the extent that it does not hesitate even to take on the role of those who divine with barley meal. But you don't properly understand what you call 'service' when applying this word to the overwhelming power of the gods, and their superabundant goodness, and their all-encompassing responsibility, their care and patronage. Moreover, you ignore the manner of their activity, that this is neither drawn down nor turned toward us, but, being transcendent, it guides and gives itself to its participants; and is neither altered in itself nor made less, nor is it subservient to its participants, but, on the contrary, it makes use of all that is subservient to it.[46]

Iamblichus' view of the gods and their divine will is paradoxical: their divine illumination is constant and will always manifest itself if the appropriate conditions and receptivity are in place, yet simultaneously it is, in an ontological and causal sense, *superior* to necessity and is viewed as encompassing a spontaneous and creative graciousness and benevolence.[47] This reflects Iamblichus' paradoxical notion that the gods are both transcendent (and thus superior to necessity) and immanent (through their benevolence, will and love) throughout the cosmos, simultaneously.[48]

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[46] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.17 (139.8–140.4).

[47] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.4 (11.12–12.5); 1.8 (27.7–28.3); 1.12 (40.14–41.8); 1.14 (44.8–45.6); 3.18 (145.6–146.4); 3.19 (146.5–9; 147.3–11); 3.23 (155.10–156.2); 3.31 (176.3–6); Feichtinger (2003), 134.

[48] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.8 (27.7–29.7); 1.9 (29.13–30.2); 5.23 (232.11–12; 233.2–8); Shaw (1995), 29–30, n. 6; Van Liefferinge (1999), 82–85; Struck (2004), 220; George (2005), 293, n. 33.

Iamblichus' terminology of divine illumination and radiance is applied to both dream divination and oracles, showing a common mode of receiving the divine in different types of inspired divination. In his account of dream divination, Iamblichus states:

> Ἄλλοτε δὲ φωτὸς ἐπιλάμψαντος λαμπροῦ καὶ ἠρεμαίου κατέχεται μὲν ἡ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ὄψις καὶ συμμύει τε, ἀναπεπταμένη οὖσα πρότερον· αἱ δ' ἄλλαι αἰσθήσεις διεγηγερμέναι τυγχάνουσι, καὶ συναισθάνονται πῶς εἰς τὸ φῶς οἱ θεοὶ ἐκφαίνονται, ὅσα τε λέγουσιν ἀκούουσι καὶ ὅσα δρῶσιν ἴσασι παρακολουθοῦσαι.
>
> At other times, however, when a light shines brightly and peacefully, not only is the sight of the eye possessed, but closed up after previously being quite open. And the other senses are awake and consciously aware of how the gods shine forth in the light, and with a clear understanding they both hear what they say, and know what they do.[49]

The terminology of light and illumination utilised by Iamblichus in his description of this type of divine dream bears striking similarities to his description of the operation of the Oracles at Claros and Delphi.[50] In Iamblichus' account of the oracular procedure at Claros, the prophet drinks water from a spring in a subterranean chamber, undergoes various ritual preparations and then delivers his oracles. Iamblichus asserts that the water has oracular power, but refutes the idea that some prophetic spirit passes through the water. Rather the divine illuminates the spring, thus filling it with prophetic power.[51] He also maintains the prophet's drinking of the water from the spring and other ritual preparations purify the soul-vehicle and make it receptive, allowing it to receive the divine illumination fully.[52] Divine illumination emanates from the god's ethereal vehicle to the human's ethereal soul vehicle, which is wholly taken over by the gods and the oracular message is pictured in the soul's imagination: these 'pictures' or images come from the gods; thus, divine illumination irradiates the vehicle, causing divinely inspired images in it.[53] Iamblichus concludes by applying the terminology of divine illumination to the soul of the prophet: 'he has the inspiration of the god illuminating the pure sanctuary of his own soul, and providing for it an unhindered divine possession, and a perfect and unimpeded presence' (... εἰς καθαρὰν ἕδραν τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ψυχῆς ἐλλάμπουσαν ἔχει τὴν τοῦ

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49 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.2 (104.4–8).

50 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11; Finamore (1993), 58–59.

51 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (124.8–125.3); Finamore (1993), 58–59.

52 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (125.3–6); Finamore (1985); Addey (2013a), 149–167.

53 Finamore (1999), 89–93; Shaw (1995), 87; Addey (2013a), 155–156..

θεοῦ ἐπίπνοιαν, ἀκώλυτόν τε αὐτῇ παρέχει τὴν κατοκωχὴν καὶ τὴν παρουσίαν τελείαν ἀνεμπόδιστον.).[54] The terminology of divine illumination is similarly utilised by Iamblichus in his discussion of the prophetess at Delphi: his account of the Pythia as, 'illuminated by the ray of divine fire' (ἀπό τε τῆς τοῦ θείου πυρὸς ἀκτῖνος καταυγάζεται) as the fiery spirit rises from the aperture and envelops her entirely in a circle, filling her with divine brightness, is remarkably similar to the description of the spirit which encircles the dreamer and the light which shines brightly on the dreamer.[55] In a similar sense, Iamblichus comments that the woman at Branchidae, the prophetess at the Oracle of Didyma, is 'filled by the divine radiance' (πληροῦται τῆς θείας αὐγῆς).[56] The references to 'divine radiance' and the encircling of the prophet or dreamer by the divine illumination refer to the soul-vehicle, which was thought to be made spherical through its contact with the gods.[57]

Human Ascent and Receptivity (ἐπιτηδειότης)

In a similar sense to divine descent, the 'ascent' of the soul was clearly not conceptualised by Iamblichus in spatial, physical terms but as an 'abstract' ascent of the soul to its own causal origins through its receptivity (ἐπιτηδειότης); in other words, the ascent refers to an *ascent of consciousness to the gods*. Speaking of the divinatory power of the gods, Iamblichus maintains that 'existing itself prior to the totality of things, it is sufficient, by its own separateness, to fill all things to the extent that each is able to share in it' (αὐτὴ μέντοι πρὸ τῶν ὅλων προϋπάρχουσα αὐτῷ τῷ χωριστῷ ἑαυτῆς ἱκανὴ γέγονεν ἀποπληρῶσαι πάντα, καθ' ὅσον ἕκαστα δύναται αὐτῆς μετέχειν).[58] The first part of this statement emphasises the causal superiority and power of the gods, while the latter part ('the extent that each is able to share in it') refers to the 'receptivity' or 'suitability' which enables the prophet(ess) or theurgist to share in divine power.[59] Through ritual, intellectual and moral means, the human being can increase the receptivity of his or her soul to these illuminations so that they can become possessed by a deity.[60] Iamblichus' account of oracles includes an examination of the ritual preparations and procedures which the prophet(ess) undergoes in order to increase his or her receptivity to divine illumination so that he or she can become possessed and utter the oracles of the god: the prophet at Claros purifies himself through drinking

[54] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (126.1–3), trs. Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell (2003), with emendations.

[55] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (126.8–12); 3.2 (103.11–104.5).

[56] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (127.5).

[57] Iamblichus, *In. Tim*. F49; Shaw (1995), 89–92; Addey (2013a), 152–153.

[58] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.12 (129.9–11).

[59] On receptivity, cf. Chapter 1, pp. 26–28.

[60] Shaw (1995), 84–87; Addey (2013b), 7–24.

the water from the spring, withdrawal to solitary places, meditation and fasting, while the prophetess at Didyma undergoes ritual bathing, fasting for three days and withdrawal and meditation in the innermost sanctuaries of the temple.[61] Elsewhere, Iamblichus seems to suggest that different levels of ascent are involved in different cases of divine possession:

> Ἢ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἡμᾶς ἔχει, ἢ ἡμεῖς ὅλοι τοῦ θεοῦ γιγνόμεθα, ἢ κοινὴν ποιούμεθα πρὸς αὐτὸν τὴν ἐνέργειαν· καὶ ποτὲ μὲν τῆς ἐσχάτης δυνάμεως τοῦ θεοῦ μετέχομεν, ποτὲ δ' αὖ τῆς μέσης, ἐνίοτε δὲ τῆς πρώτης· καὶ ποτὲ μὲν μετουσία ψιλὴ γίγνεται, ποτὲ δὲ καὶ κοινωνία, ἐνίοτε δὲ καὶ ἕνωσις...
>
> For either the god possesses us, or we become wholly the god's property, or we exercise our activity in common with him. And sometimes we share in the god's lowest power, sometimes in his intermediate, and sometimes in his primary power. And sometimes there is a mere participation, sometimes a communion, and sometimes even a union ...[62]

According to Iamblichus' schema, different states of divine possession can involve: participation sharing in the god's lowest power, communion sharing in the god's intermediate power and union sharing in the god's primary power. The level of ascent involved in these types of possession seems to be partially dependent upon the receptivity of the possessed human being: the greater the capacity or receptivity of the human being, the greater the level of ascent. However, participation, communion and union are *all* conceived as types of ascent to the divine within a continuum of ascent, conceptualised philosophically as reversion to the causal origin of the human being.

The soul is seen as the receptacle of the gods, a conception which seems similar to Mary Keller's notion of the 'instrumental agency' of the possessed.[63]

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[61] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (125.11–126.3; 127.10–13). At 125.4–6, Iamblichus states that the prophet's drinking of the water from the oracular spring 'bestows the receptivity and purification of the luminous spirit in us, through which we are able to receive the god' (αὕτη μὲν ἐπιτηδειότητα μόνον καὶ ἀποκάθαρσιν τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν αὐγοειδοῦς πνεύματος ἐμποιεῖ, δι' ἣν δυνατοὶ γιγνόμεθα χωρεῖν τὸν θεόν). Cf. Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell (2003), 147, n. 200: 'the luminous spirit within us' refers to the soul vehicle; Finamore (1985), 128–129.

[62] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.5 (111.7–11).

[63] Iamblichus refers to the 'divine element of the soul' (which acts as a receptacle for the gods) at *DM* 1.15 (46.9); 5.26 (239.6); 7.4 (255.13–256.2); 8.7 (269.11–13; 270.6–14). The 'One of the soul' (the same pre-ontological connection with the divine): Iamblichus, *In Phaedr.* F6; Dillon (1973, repr. 2009), 253. The notion of instrumental agency: Keller (2002) primarily focuses on the role of women in possession cults in postcolonial contexts,

Keller maintains that instrumentality in possession states refers to the power of receptivity, comparable metaphorically to a hammer, flute or horse that is wielded, played or mounted, while agency implies action as well as 'a place where exchanges occur.'[64] Iamblichus too focuses on the receptivity of the possessed, describing them as an 'instrument' (ὄχημα) and 'vehicle' (ὄργανον) of the gods.[65] Divine possession for Iamblichus is not a matter of a totally alien agency overcoming its human victim. Rather, it is conceptualised as a phenomenon involving a transcendent and simultaneously immanent deity working *through* the soul of the possessed. The deity is conceived as being already linked to the human soul causally and pre-ontologically and so the possession experience is seen as enhancing and transforming the soul. Thus, receptivity to the divine is seen as enhancing the human being and is a source of power.[66] This conceptualisation of divine possession can be more fully explored using Keller's notion of instrumental agency, since the notion of instrumentality entails a far more subtle conception of the agency of the possessed individual: 'the instrumental designation indicates that the subject exercises a unique type of agency that is neither autonomous nor passive.'[67] Keller maintains that 'the concept of instrumental agency serves to highlight the way that receptivity has often been evaluated as an extremely powerful capacity among possession traditions. Rather than coding receptivity negatively as a type of passivity, instrumental agency accounts for this revaluation; one's receptivity marks a developable sacred space.'[68] This notion of instrumental agency allows us to appreciate the nuances of Iamblichus' account of divine possession and to reassess his conceptualisation of the receptivity (ἐπιτηδειότης) of the possessed as a developable sacred space – a 'space' where the individual can develop his or her discipline and contemplation using intellectual, ritual and moral means to increase his or her capacity to receive the divine. Thus possession itself is reassessed as a sacred space which necessarily entails the involvement of both divine and

but many of her theoretical observations on conceptions of agency in spirit possession are relevant to scholarship on divine possession and divination in ancient religious contexts. Cf. also Addey (2013b), 7–24.

[64] Keller (2002), 9–10.

[65] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.4 (109.11); 3.1 (101.2–6); 3.7 (115.4–5); 3.11 (125.9); 3.14 (132.10).

[66] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.8 (29.1–3); 1.12 (41.9–13); 3.2 (105.5–8); 3.5 (111.11–13); 3.31 (179.3–8); 4.2 (184.1–6); 4.3 (185.9–12). Cf especially *DM* 3.25 (158.9–159.4): divine possession 'furnishes goods more precious than human good sense' and causes the ascent of the soul by uniting it to participation in the divine; 3.25 (159.10–11): 'divine possession is a perfection and deliverance of the soul' (ἡ δὲ θεοφορία τελειότης καὶ σωτηρία τῆς ψυχῆς).

[67] Keller (2002), 77.

[68] Keller (2002), 82.

human agency.[69] While Iamblichus makes it clear that the divine agency is hierarchically superior (as the ultimate and primary cause), human agency is marked by a subtle (yet crucial) blend of humbleness or openness *and* activity: receptivity has to be developed through assimilation to the divine in ethical, ritual and intellectual spheres.[70]

Levels of Ascent and Connection to the Gods: Participation, Communion and Union in Dream Divination (*oneiromancy*) and Oracles

Iamblichus claims that divine possession and inspiration can involve three cumulative stages or types of connection to the gods: what exactly are the distinguishing features of (and differences between) participation (μετουσία), communion (κοινωνία) and union (ἕνωσις)?[71] These cumulative stages of ascent are clearly linked with the prophet(ess)'s receptivity, but can we be more specific about them? Firstly, the stages of connection correlate with the type of possession experience: participation involves the god completely possessing the prophet(ess) (ὁ θεὸς ἡμᾶς ἔχει), communion involves the prophet(ess) becoming 'wholly of the god' (ἡμεῖς ὅλοι τοῦ θεοῦ γιγνόμεθα), while 'union' involves exercising 'our activity in common with him [i.e. the god]' (κοινὴν ποιούμεθα πρὸς αὐτὸν τὴν ἐνέργειαν).[72] Iamblichus' characterisation of the state of 'union' (ἕνωσις) offers a vital clue: 'exercising our activity' in common with the god implies divine work (theurgy) and suggests the attainment of vision of intelligible reality, since truth co-exists 'in essence' with the gods because it is based in the intelligible realm. This suggests that the levels of contact and ascent are connected, at least partially, with the individual soul's memory of intelligible reality.[73] Yet

[69] Cf. *DM* 5.23 (232.5–7) on the conjunction of divine causal agencies and human preparations aligning themselves with the former in the operation of efficacious sacrifices which confer great benefits, a statement which encapsulates Iamblichus' attitude towards all efficacious types of ritual.

[70] The humbleness and openness which form a vital component of receptivity are characterised by Iamblichus as 'consciousness of our nothingness' (ἡ συναίσθησις τῆς περὶ ἑαυτοὺς οὐδενείας) in comparison with the gods which naturally makes humans turn to prayers to the gods: *DM* 1.15 (47.13–48.3). Cf. Feichtinger (2003), 123–160; Shaw (1995), 111–112.

[71] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.5 (111.9–11). These three stages of contact with the gods which characterise the possession experience parallel the three cumulative stages of prayer set out at *DM* 5.26 (237.12–238.5). Cf. pp. 215–216, n. 5 above.

[72] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.5 (111.7–9).

[73] A vital caveat must be mentioned: I am not suggesting that theurgy was conceived as simply dependent upon intellectual thought nor that possession states are caused by intellectual thought, both of which Iamblichus repeatedly denies. Rather, possession

this type of memory is memory in a Platonic sense (that is, memory of the eternal realities experienced before the first descent into the body) which draws on (and develops) the theory of Recollection.[74] Those ritual practitioners who have trained their consciousness and contemplated intelligible reality while simultaneously developing their receptivity (through ethical and ritual means) may attain a greater level of connection to the gods through their assimilation to the divine vision and are more likely to *remember* their possession experience because of their *conscious* familiarity with the intelligible world of noetic reality. Consequently, it seems that the levels of ascent also correlate with the prophet(ess)'s or theurgist's *memory* of the possession experience: the degree to which they *remember* the prophetic visions experienced during the possession states depends on whether they experience participation, communion or union. Iamblichus implies that participation involves experiencing divine consciousness but not remembering the experience, while communion and union imply increasing familiarity and affinity

states are conceptualised as the individual receiving divine illumination and experiencing a simultaneous ascent of consciousness, to a greater or lesser degree. Yet intellectual contemplation is a vital prerequisite for theurgy and an important component of the individual's receptivity; thus, repeated and habitual contemplation of intelligible reality (if practised alongside ritual and ethical practices which allow the cultivation of receptivity) is conceived as potentially enabling an affinity or familiarity with intelligible reality which aids memory of subsequent visions attained through divinatory experiences: see below for an examination of Iamblichus' account of the role of intellectual activity and consciousness in dream divination in *DM* 3.2–3.3.

[74] There may be an important parallel with the salvific function of Memory (Mnemosyne) in the tradition represented by the Orphic gold tablets here: Pinchard (2012), 1, states: 'Authentic Orphism may be defined as the cultural process ... that leads from the positive valuation of external memory concerning epic or theogonic old patterns ... towards the positive valuation of the internal memory which is conceived of as bringing the philosopher's soul in touch with eternal realities' and 'Plato goes one step further in the identification between the one who remembers and the object that is remembered in the salvific remembrance. Whereas in the gold tablets Mnemosyne's water is for the initiate the only means to reach his own divine centre, the Platonic *anamnêsis* is already the real immortality itself. Henceforth the internal life of the soul is an aspect of intellectual activity ... the salvation is somehow obtained through remembering memory ... The act of remembering is from now on the aim as well as the means, the goal as well as the road. For the intelligible Forms stand inside the remembering intellect ...The divine part of the soul, the intellect, is not something which can accidentally remember, but is the remembering itself. In this case the subject and its act are not to be separated ... The *noesis* must be a circular movement because the intelligible Forms which the intellect can grasp stand at the centre of the soul since its origin. So the act through which the intellect returns to itself is its very essence. *Anamnêsis* is nothing less than such a return, such a connection between end and beginning' (15).

with, and consequently memory of, the divine visions experienced during the possession state.

This characteristic of connection with the gods is implied in Iamblichus' comments regarding a difference in the level of conscious awareness between the dreamer and the oracular prophet(ess). The dreamer's senses (although his physical eyes are closed) are consciously aware of how the gods shine forth in their light, and he or she has a clear understanding of what the gods say and do.[75] According to Iamblichus, certain dreamers have an even higher level of conscious awareness where their intellect (νοῦς) is engaged:

> Τελειότερον δ' ἔτι τοῦδε θεωρεῖται, ἡνίκα ἂν καὶ ἡ ὄψις βλέπῃ καὶ ὁ νοῦς ἐρρωμένος ἐπακολουθῇ τοῖς δρωμένοις, κίνησίς τε τῶν θεωρούντων συνυπάρχῃ.
>
> This is observed even more fully when the sight is active and also the mind (νοῦς), with full vigour, understands the things done, and there is a response at the same time in those observing.[76]

Since Iamblichus states that the mind has 'full vigour' (ὁ νοῦς ἐρρωμένος), presumably 'active sight' (ἡ ὄψις βλέπῃ) has a metaphorical sense, referring to the dreamer's wisdom. Iamblichus is clearly alluding to the theurgist, since the idea of the mind of having full vigour is reminiscent of the instructions given to the theurgist in the *Chaldean Oracles*.[77] It is the theurgist who would comprehend the 'things done' (τοῖς δρωμένοις) or, in other words, the process of receiving a god-sent dream. In other words, the philosopher-theurgist is fully aware and fully understands the divinatory dream. The understanding of the philosopher-theurgist dreamer will be discussed further below.

When Iamblichus turns to his description of Oracles, he comments on the consciousness of the prophet of Claros:

> ...χρῆται ὡς ὀργάνῳ τῷ προφήτῃ οὔτε ἑαυτοῦ ὄντι οὔτε παρακολουθοῦντι οὐδὲν οἷς λέγει ἢ ὅπου γῆς ἐστιν· ὥστε καὶ μετὰ τὴν χρησμῳδίαν μόγις ποτὲ ἑαυτὸν λαμβάνει·
>
> ... [the god] uses the prophet as an instrument while he is neither himself nor has any consciousness of what he says or where on earth he is, so that even after prophesying, he sometimes scarcely gets control of himself.[78]

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75 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.2 (104.4–10). Cf. Finamore (1998), 161.

76 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.2 (104.8–10).

77 *Chald. Or.* F1; F2.

78 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (125.9–11).

Clearly there is a marked difference between the ecstatic trance of the oracular prophet and the full and clear understanding of the dreamer, in Iamblichus' view. The prophet at Claros does not remember and is not conscious of his prophetic utterances while experiencing divine inspiration; this implies that his connection to the god is conceived as 'participation' (μετουσία). The extent to which Iamblichus' comments on the consciousness of the prophet of Claros are applicable to all oracular prophets and prophetesses is somewhat unclear: for example, Iamblichus' description of the Pythia at Delphi becoming 'wholly the god's possession' (ὅλη γίγνεται τοῦ θεοῦ) utilises the precise terminology which he applies to the intermediate state of 'communion' (κοινωνία) and thus suggests the need for some caution.[79] It is probable that Iamblichus assumed that the receptivity of each specific prophet(ess) could vary widely depending on the individual's capacities and their active cultivation of their receptivity, so that generalisation according to the type of divination utilised or according to the precise divinatory context is not possible.

A vital caveat must be also be mentioned, with respect to the differences adduced between the conscious awareness of the dreamer and that of the oracular prophet: Iamblichus justifies his comments on the clarity of the dreamer's conscious understanding in the context of Porphyry's challenge that our level of consciousness while asleep must be less than when one is awake, and therefore our waking consciousness and understanding is superior to that experienced in divine 'god-sent' (θεόπεμπτοι) dreams. By pointing to the dreamer's clear understanding, Iamblichus is refuting Porphyry's challenge:

> Οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ οἷον τέ ἐστι τὴν ἐναργῆ παρουσίαν τῶν θεῶν τῆς ὕπαρ ἐγγιγνομένης παρακολουθήσεως ἀπολείπεσθαι· ἀλλ' εἰ χρὴ τἀληθὲς εἰπεῖν, καὶ σαφεστέραν αὐτὴν εἶναι ἀνάγκη καὶ ἀκριβεστέραν ἐκείνης καὶ σύνεσιν ἐμποιοῦσαν τελειοτέραν.
>
> For it is surely impossible that the gods' clear presence could be inferior to that of wakeful consciousness. And if we are to speak the truth, the divine presence must be even more clear and distinct than that, and produce a more perfect understanding.[80]

The distinction in terms of conscious awareness may be related to the relevant ritual context: the dreamer would have to remember their divine vision themselves whereas the oracular prophet(ess) (μάντις) may have had an interpreter to record and interpret the oracles issuing from them.

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[79] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (126.12–13); 3.5 (111.8).

[80] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.2 (105.5–8).

In another sense too, the difference in conscious awareness between those experiencing dream divination and oracles may be related to the specific nature of dreaming. Iamblichus quotes Porphyry's statement that the soul has a double life, one with the body and the other apart from the body. When one is awake one mostly uses the life in common with the body, apart from when thinking or engaging in pure thoughts, when one detaches oneself from the body. In sleep, Iamblichus postulates, we are completely freed from the chains of the body and engage in a life detached from generation.[81] This purification from generation is similar to the state cultivated by the philosopher in his waking life, which may account for the high degree of awareness of the dreamer.

Iamblichus then sets out the philosophical basis and a hierarchy of different types of dream divination:

> Τότε δὴ οὖν, εἴτε νοερὸν εἴτε θεῖον ταὐτὸν ὑπάρχον εἴτε καὶ ἓν ἑκάτερον ἰδίᾳ καθ' ἑαυτὸ ὄν, τὸ τῆς ζωῆς εἶδος ἀνεγείρεται ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ ἐνεργεῖ ἧ πέφυκεν.' Επειδὴ οὖν ὁ μὲν νοῦς τὰ ὄντα θεωρεῖ, λόγους δ' ἡ ψυχὴ τῶν γιγνομένων ἐν αὐτῇ πάντων περιέχει, εἰκότως δὴ κατὰ τὴν περιέχουσαν αἰτίαν τασσόμενα ἐν τοῖς προηγουμένοις αὐτῶν λόγοις προγιγνώσκει τὰ μέλλοντα. Καὶ ταύτης δ' ἔτι τελειοτέραν ποιεῖται μαντείαν, ἡνίκα ἂν τοῖς ὅλοις, ἀφ' ὧν ἀπεμερίσθη, συνάπτῃ τὰς μοίρας τῆς ζωῆς καὶ τῆς νοερᾶς ἐνεργείας· πληροῦται γὰρ ἀπὸ τῶν ὅλων τότε τῆς πάσης εἰδήσεως, ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖστον ἐξικνεῖσθαι ταῖς ἐννοίαις τῶν περὶ τὸν κόσμον ἐπιτελουμένων.
>
> At this time, then, this form of life, whether it is intellectual or divine, which is the same thing, or each one separately, it is aroused in us, and energises according to its own nature. Since the intellect, then, contemplates real beings, and the soul encompasses the reasons in itself of everything coming into existence, it is reasonable that it should know beforehand future things arranged according to their predominant reasons, and the first cause which encompasses them. And it produces an even more perfect divination, surely, when it unites its apportioned lots of life and intellectual activity to the universals from which it had been separated. For it is then filled from the universals of total knowledge, so that, for the most part, it arrives at conceptions of what goes on in the cosmos.[82]

[81] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.3 (106.3–9); 5.15 (219.1–5). Cf. Shaw (1995), 82; Finamore (1998), 157, points out that this passage of Iamblichus clearly echoes Plato's *Resp*. 571b, since Plato had emphasised that the person who had trained reason to command irrational impulses in the day is the one who keeps them from interfering with dreams at night.

[82] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.3 (106.9–107.4), trs. Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell (2003), with emendations. Cf. Finamore (1998), 161–162, for the excellent suggestion that Iamblichus' *DM* 3.3 presents a hierarchy of different types of divination based upon the source of the

Iamblichus first sets out a general theory of the operation of dream divination: he argues that in sleep, the human body is detached from the chains of generation and, therefore, can potentially contemplate real beings (τὰ ὄντα).[83] This idea is based on the Neoplatonist principle that 'like attracts like', since Iamblichus states that the soul encompasses the reasons of everything coming into existence (in a manner appropriate to soul): thus, the soul can contemplate real beings because it contains the principles of all things. Iamblichus' explanation is also clearly based on the Platonic theory of Recollection, the theory that the human soul has seen the Forms before it first descended into a body. Iamblichus maintains that since the soul encompasses the reasons of everything coming into existence, it is reasonable it should know beforehand future things arranged according to their first principles, and the first cause which encompasses them. This is based on the Neoplatonist concept that all things are contained in potentiality in that which causes them, a notion that is fundamental to the later Neoplatonist metaphysical structure of the cosmos. Thus, Iamblichus asserts, by knowing the principles, the soul can know future matters which arise from specific principles. The first principles of future things are, according to Iamblichus, encompassed by the first cause. As we have already seen, for Iamblichus, the first, or highest cause is divinity. So, by knowing the divine, which is eternal and unchanging, humans can know the future.

Iamblichus claims that the intellect produces an 'even more perfect divination' when it unites its apportioned lots of life (μοίρας τῆς ζωῆς) and intellectual activity (νοερᾶς ἐνεργείας) to the universals: when it is filled with the universals of total knowledge, it can arrive at conceptions of what goes on in the cosmos. Finamore claims that by using the term 'universals', Iamblichus refers here to contact with the visible gods, who fill the soul with knowledge of future events that the soul discovers with its own thoughts.[84] It is somewhat unclear as to whether this stage of dream divination is envisaged as 'communion' or 'union', for the dreamer uniting his 'activity' to the universals is similar to, but not quite the same, as 'exercising one's activity in common with the god', the characterisation of 'union'. In his subsequent comment, Iamblichus clearly refers to 'union':

> Ἀλλ' ἐὰν μὲν τὸ νοερὸν ἑαυτῆς ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ θεῖον συνυφαίνῃ τοῖς κρείττοσι, τότε καὶ τὰ φαντάσματα αὐτῆς ἔσται καθαρώτερα,

divination and the level of psychic involvement. Finamore claims that five types of dream divination are presented here.

[83] Cf. Finamore (1998), 162, who comments: 'By *ta onta* Iamblichus means, of course, the Forms, which reside at the level of the Demiurgic Intellect; the *logoi* are the active reason principles of the Demiurge at work within the cosmos.'

[84] Finamore (1998), 162 and n. 18, claims that the 'universals' mentioned here are the visible gods, referring to the whole souls of the visible gods as differentiated from 'partial' human souls (citing Proclus, *In Tim*. 3.276.19–22).

> ἤτοι περὶ θεῶν ἢ τῶν καθ' ἑαυτὰς ἀσωμάτων οὐσιῶν, ἢ ὡς ἁπλῶς εἰπεῖν περὶ τῶν εἰς ἀλήθειαν συμβαλλομένων τὴν περὶ τῶν νοητῶν.
>
> But if the soul weaves together its intellectual and its divine part with higher powers (τοῖς κρείττοσι), then its own visions will be purer, whether of the gods, or of essentially incorporeal beings, or, generally speaking, of whatever contributes to the truth about intelligible things.[85]

This passage clearly refers to 'union' because the soul exercises its activity in common with the god, weaving together its intellectual and divine part with the 'higher powers' or 'greater kinds', Iamblichus' habitual designation for the gods and divine orders.[86] Iamblichus later adds:

> Ἐὰν δὲ τοὺς λόγους τῶν γιγνομένων ἀνάγῃ πρὸς τοὺς αἰτίους αὐτῶν θεούς, δύναμιν ἀπ' αὐτῶν προσλαμβάνει καὶ γνῶσιν ἀναλογιζομένην ὅσα τε ἦν καὶ ὅσα ἔσται, θεωρίαν τε παντὸς χρόνου ποιεῖται καὶ τῶν ἐν τῷ χρόνῳ συμβαινόντων ἐπισκοπεῖ τὰ ἔργα, τάξιν τε αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπιμέλειαν καὶ ἐπανόρθωσιν τὴν προσήκουσαν μεταλαγχάνει·
>
> If, however, it refers accounts of things happening to their causes, that is, to the gods, it receives from them a power and knowledge embracing things that were and will be, and takes a view of all time, and surveys events happening in time, and it participates in their order, care and appropriate improvement.[87]

This section reflects the task of the theurgist, for theurgy involves referring accounts of things happening to their first, highest causes, that is, the gods. In dream divination, the theurgist-dreamer can survey all events happening in time and thereby participate in their order, care and appropriate movement.[88] The theurgist

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[85] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.3 (107.7–11).

[86] Finamore (1993), 163, makes the excellent suggestion that this type of dream divination connects the recipient to the intelligible gods, basing his argument on Iamblichus' description of this type of dream as providing 'the truth about intelligible things' (περὶ τῶν εἰς ἀλήθειαν συμβαλλομένων τὴν περὶ τῶν νοητῶν. *DM* 3.3 [107.10–11]). The argument is also based on his identification of the preceding type of divination at 107.4–7 as uniting the dreamer with the 'intellectual gods' because it is said to receive the 'totality of intellections'.

[87] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.3 (107.11–108.3), trs. Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell (2003), with emendations.

[88] Finamore (1998), 163, describes this type of dream divination as follows: 'Here the soul, existing out of time, attains a synoptic view of things existing in time and even shares in

seeks to unite his soul to the highest cause, the gods, and thereby participates in the order and care of the universe, imitating the creative action of the Demiurge.

Yet although 'communion' and 'union' are conceived as being the states most commonly attained by the theurgist, it is difficult to establish a firm differentiation between the theurgist and the oracular prophet or dreamer in relation to their experience of the stages of connection to the gods (participation – communion – union). In fact, following the discussion of the philosophical basis of dream divination, Iamblichus immediately offers the example of dream incubation as it was practised in Asclepius' sanctuaries and its power to cure diseases (which he follows with other examples of divine dreams and their practical benefits).[89] In doing so, he refers to a traditional (and public) oracular institution associated with dream incubation. He concludes his list of examples by stating, 'But why go through such occurrences one by one, when daily events offer a clarity greater than any story?' (Καὶ τί δεῖ καθ' ἕκαστον ἐπεξιόντι μηνύειν, τῶν καθ' ἡμέραν ἀεὶ συμπιπτόντων κρείττονα τοῦ λόγου τὴν ἐνάργειαν παρεχομένων;), a comment which seemingly alludes to the theurgists.[90] In terms of the stages of connection to the gods experienced by the ritual practitioner, no clearcut differentiation between theurgy and traditional religious practices can be observed in Iamblichus' account, pointing to the philosopher's insistence on the line of unbroken continuity and community which extends throughout all cultic ritual and worship in which human beings receive the gods.[91]

Conclusion

Iamblichus' views on divine inspiration and possession, while appropriate for the theurgist, follow the Greek religious and philosophical tradition and accord especially with Plato's concept of 'prophetic madness' delineated in the *Phaedrus*, and the notion of 'divine inspiration' expressed in the *Ion*. Thus, Iamblichus' notions of divine inspiration and possession directly inform his account of oracles and other forms of inspired divination. Although Iamblichus' account emphasises that the possessed individual does not act or experience in a human manner involving sense perception, this does not entail that he or she has no consciousness at all. The central point is that the inspired or possessed individual has no consciousness of anything else *except the gods*. This implies a replacement or enhancement of human consciousness by divine consciousness in possession

the rank (*taxis*) of the intelligible gods themselves.'

[89] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.3 (108.6–8).

[90] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.3 (109.1–3); Shaw (2012) 96–97.

[91] Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 32–34; Chapter 7, pp. 277–280; Iamblichus, *DM* 1.9 (31.9–32.6); 5.10 (211.12–14); 5.20 (227.1–10); 5.21 (228.11–229.6; 229.10–230.11); 5.24 (235.7–11); 5.26 (240.9–14); Shaw (2012), 97.

rituals. Iamblichus' account rests on the notion of simultaneous divine descent and human ascent: the human soul ascends to the gods while the gods descend to the human soul to possess it. Yet the divine descent is envisaged in terms of divine illumination (constantly available and present throughout all ontological levels), which is the idiom through which Iamblichus iterates the immanence of the gods. The terminology of divine illumination is applied by Iamblichus to oracles and dream divination. Meanwhile the human ascent partially depends on the ritual practitioner's capacities and active cultivation of his or her receptivity. Receptivity is implicitly coded as a developable sacred space which is marked by a subtle blend of openness and humbleness combined with an active and simultaneous cultivation of intellectual, ritual and ethical discipline and praxis. Iamblichus envisages the ascent of the soul as *an ascent of consciousness to the gods* which is partially dependent on the individual's cultivation of receptivity, although primarily and ultimately dependent on the will of the gods themselves. Thus, the god works *through* the soul of the possessed, replacing or enhancing the consciousness of the ritual practitioner. The level of contact or connection with the gods (and thus, the level of ascent) is designated in three cumulative stages: participation, communion and union, all of which involve receiving and manifesting the divine illumination of the gods. Yet, the extent to which the prophet(ess) or theurgist has cultivated his or her receptivity will affect the type of connection or contact experienced: those who have trained their consciousness and contemplated intelligible reality while simultaneously developing their receptivity through ritual and ethical praxis may attain a greater level of connection to the gods through their assimilation to and alignment with the divine vision and are more likely to *remember* their possession experience because of their *conscious* familiarity with the intelligible world of noetic reality. Consequently, it seems that the levels of ascent also correlate with the prophet(ess)'s or theurgist's *memory* of the possession experience: Iamblichus implies that participation involves experiencing divine consciousness but not remembering the experience, while communion and union imply increasing familiarity and affinity with, and consequently memory of, the divine visions experienced during the possession state. In terms of the stages of connection to the gods experienced by the ritual practitioner, no clearcut differentiation between the theurgist and the prophet(ess) of the oracular sanctuary can be observed in Iamblichus' account, pointing to the philosopher's insistence on the line of unbroken continuity and community which extends throughout all cultic ritual and worship in which human beings receive the gods. The line of unbroken continuity and community uniting theurgy with traditional religious practices will become even clearer in Iamblichus' account of oracles and other forms of inspired divination.

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Chapter 7
Divination and Theurgy in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*

Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* offers a typology of diverse types of divination, categorising them into 'inspired' and 'inductive' modes.[1] Using this typology, Iamblichus classifies oracles and dream divination (*oneiromancy*) as 'inspired' divination, exploring the nature and operation of the Oracles of Delphi, Didyma and Claros (introducing these well-known oracular sanctuaries as representative case studies), dream divination (*oneiromancy*) and various types of inductive divination. This chapter will explore Iamblichus' views on these varied types of divination, as well as the role of inspired divination (μαντική) within theurgy (which I will refer to as 'theurgic divination'). Given the central role of oracles and other forms of divination in traditional religious practices, this chapter will also consider the precise relationship between theurgy and traditional religion.

As discussed in Chapter 6, Iamblichus' views on divination are based on three key axioms.[2] This chapter will focus on the second axiom: Iamblichus' metaphysical framework of a hierarchical schema of causation which contributes towards the fundamental distinction drawn between inspired and inductive divination. I will argue that the centrality of divination within theurgy (and thus within later Neoplatonism more broadly) stems from Iamblichus' conception of inspired divination as a supra-rational phenomenon, a state which represents the inclusion, culmination and transcendence of rationality rather than any lack thereof. Iamblichus conceptualises theurgic divination and ritual as supra-rational, envisaging rationality and revelation as complementary and interlinked, rather than as mutually exclusive categories. This forms the basis of Iamblichus' view of inspired divination (μαντική) as a stage on the way to (and a sign of) mystical union with the divine and a significant element of divinisation which forms the central purpose and goal of theurgy.

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1 Cf. Chapter 6, p. 215.
2 Cf. Chapter 6, p. 216.

Iamblichus' Classification of Divination: Inspired and Inductive Divination

Iamblichus' account of divine possession influences his categorisation of divination into two types: inspired and inductive.[3] He distinguishes these types by their proximity to the divine and by the respective modes of causation governing them. These two criteria are connected, for Iamblichus conceives of a framework of a hierarchical, multiple schema of causation, where multiple causes are perceived as operating *simultaneously*: thus, the ultimate or primary cause of inspired divination is the divine. This framework, which underlies Iamblichus' discussion of divination, is loosely based on the theory of causation established in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which sets out four kinds of causes, standardly called the Final, Formal, Material and Efficient causes.[4] According to Aristotle, all of these causes operate simultaneously to produce any given effect and they function hierarchically, with the highest cause having the greatest effect. While Iamblichus does not specifically refer to Aristotle's four causes, his explanation of divination operates within a similar causal framework, for he repeatedly emphasises the necessity of distinguishing between the primary cause of divination and subordinate, auxiliary causes.[5]

Following the general methodology utilised within the Platonic tradition of locating the principle of a phenomenon before discussing its particular manifestations, Iamblichus opens Book 3 with an account of the principle of inspired divination (μαντική), countering the implication of Porphyry's question

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[3] Cf. Chapter 6, pp. 215–217.

[4] Aristotle, *Met.* 983a24–b7. The Greek term commonly translated as 'cause', αἰτία, has a much wider range of meaning and connotation than the English word 'cause' which tends to connote activity and events: a cause is something which does something. This is reinforced by the modern tendency to treat causes as events. These modern connotations are misleading when we examine ancient Greek notions of causation, where to be αἴτιος for something is to be responsible for it: responsibility is a broader concept than modern notions of causation. An αἰτία covers a much wider picture of explanation of a particular phenomenon or object; it can be anything which is referred to as being in some way explanatory of something. Cf. Plato, *Cra.* 413a; Hankinson (1998), 85–86; Frede (1987), 125–127.

[5] For a detailed study of the ways in which Iamblichus' account of divination utilises a theory of multiple causation ultimately derived from Aristotle's theory, cf. Addey (2007b), 73–87. In the intervening period between Aristotle and Iamblichus, many Platonists and Stoics developed similar theories of causation, many of which utilise the so-called 'metaphysic of prepositions', a phrase coined by Theiler to describe the common use of prepositional phrases to denote specific causes. This metaphysic of prepositions is apparent in: (1) Seneca's Stoic theory of causation which is contrasted with a synthesis of Platonic and Aristotelian theories of causation; and (2) Philo of Alexandria's discussion of causation which synthesises Stoic, Platonic and Aristotelian theories. Cf. Seneca, *Epistle* 65.2–8; Philo, *De Opificio Mundi* 8–9; 16–19; *On the Cherubim* 125; Theiler (1964); Dillon (1977), 139–183; Hankinson (1998), 338; 340–345.

about the essential nature of divination, that it is a phenomenon that 'comes into being' and is 'among the things existing in nature': Iamblichus emphasises that the principle and power of inspired divination belongs to the gods – it is divine.[6] Thus divine inspiration is directly linked with inspired divination, the mode of divination which has the closest proximity to the gods.[7] Iamblichus claims that all other causes of inspired divination are subordinate and instrumental; the divine is the ultimate cause, as will be explored further below.

Iamblichus introduces inductive divination as entirely different from inspired divination: he considers it to be a largely 'human' endeavour (τέχνης ἀνθρωπίνης) and far less accurate than the inspired mode, because the predictions made are the result of 'guessing and supposition' (στοχασμοῦ καὶ οἰήσεως).[8] Iamblichus explains that this type of divination operates using signs which are implanted (or illuminated) by the gods through nature and also through the agency of *daimones* who are concerned with creation.[9] This process is clearly based on the concept of sympathy (συμπάθεια) and, by implication, ultimately (but much more remotely) on the concept of divine love (θεία φιλία).[10] These signs (σημεῖα, σύμβολα) are perfect since they are implanted by divinities or semi-divine beings; the inferiority of inductive divination stems rather from the central role of human interpretation in deciphering their meaning.[11] Thus Iamblichus' distinction between inspired and inductive divination is based on their proximity to divinity and on the consequent type of consciousness thought to be experienced by the ritual practitioner: inspired divination is caused by the supreme power of the gods and the practitioner is thought to access a type of divine consciousness, whereas inductive divination, although utilising signs implanted by the gods, depends upon human interpretation (purely human consciousness). Iamblichus' differentiation of modes of divination according to their respective proximity to divinity has significant implications for his views of the relationship between inspired divination and theurgy, as will be explored below.

The division of divination into these two types and the comparative value placed upon them had a long history in the Graeco-Roman philosophical tradition: the Platonists and Stoics always distinguished between these two types of divination,

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6 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.1 (100.6–9; 100.12–14; 101.2–3).

7 Cf. Chapter 6, p. 216 and n. 7.

8 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.15 (135.1–2).

9 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.15 (135.10–136.4); 3.16 (138.6–11).

10 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.16 (138.1–5).

11 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.16 (138.6–139.3). Cf. also 3.15 (135.7–10), recalling Porphyry's suggestion that divination using sense-perception must be inferior (*DM* 3.4 [109.6–9]). Here it is the use of human senses, rather than the signs themselves, that causes the inferiority of inductive divination.

which the latter referred to as 'natural' and 'artificial'.[12] The distinction is first recorded by Plato, who also comments explicitly on their comparative value as modes of prophetic knowledge:

> ὅσῳ δὴ οὖν τελεώτερον καὶ ἐντιμότερον μαντικὴ οἰωνιστικῆς, τό τε ὄνομα τοῦ ὀνόματος ἔργον τ' ἔργου, τόσῳ κάλλιον μαρτυροῦσιν οἱ παλαιοὶ μανίαν σωφροσύνης τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ τῆς παρ' ἀνθρώπων γιγνομένης.
>
> The ancients, then testify that in proportion as prophecy is superior to augury, both in name and in fact, in the same proportion madness, which comes from god, is superior to sanity, which is of human origin.[13]

Plato maintains that μαντική (inspired divination) is superior to augury (representative of inductive divination) but significantly also comments that divine, prophetic madness is superior to sanity, which is of human origin. Iamblichus postulates a conceptual framework of inductive divination (ultimately caused by human skill) and inspired divination (ultimately caused by the divine) which accords with Plato's distinction between divine madness and human sanity.

Furthermore, Plato's *Ion* elaborates on the themes discussed in the *Phaedrus* within the context of a long speech by Socrates exploring the nature of divine inspiration, focusing especially on poetic and prophetic inspiration. The whole dialogue explores the distinction between human knowledge and skill (τέχνη) and divine inspiration, using the example of Ion's great talent as a rhapsode, with Socrates and Ion debating the origin of this talent.[14] During his speech, Socrates constantly emphasises that poetry and prophecy are not products of human skill but of divine power. Indeed, this is the first point he makes when he attempts to explain to Ion the origin of his rhapsodic talent.[15] Although Socrates specifically refers to rhapsodic talent here, within the speech he repeatedly equates the inspiration from which the talent of the rhapsode, poet and prophet derives.[16] The distinction delineated between divine power (θεία δύναμις) and human skill or art (τέχνη) in Plato's *Ion* is reflected almost exactly in Iamblichus' account of divination, which claims that inspired divination obtains all of its power from

[12] Plato, *Phdr.* 244d2–6; Cicero, *Div.* 2.11.26–27; 1.6.11; 1.33.72. Cf. Luck (1985), 231; 271; Armstrong (1987), 179.

[13] Plato, *Phdr.* 244d2–6.

[14] Plato, *Ion* 530b–533b.

[15] Plato, *Ion* 533d. Cf. also 534e, 535a, 536c–d, 542a.

[16] Cf. Plato, *Ion* 534c–d, where the divine inspiration received by the poet is explicitly equated with that received by seers; 533e–534a, where Socrates compares poetic inspiration with the inspiration experienced by Corybantian and Bacchic worshippers.

divinity, while inductive divination is a human skill (τέχνης ἀνθρωπίνης), alluding to Plato's discussion with the use of the same term, τέχνη, to denote this inferior type of divination.[17] Thus, as with his views of divine inspiration, Iamblichus does not invent new categories in his conceptions of divination; rather he follows Graeco-Roman philosophical tradition, especially Plato.

Inspired Divination and Models of Causation

As we have seen, Iamblichus counters Porphyry's challenge that divination is purely a human achievement, a case of humans using the right equipment, location and techniques, by emphasising in the strongest possible terms that the principle of inspired divination is divine and eternal.[18] The philosopher stresses the difference between primary and secondary causes of divination:

> Εἰ δή τις ἀφέμενος τῶν πρωτουργῶν αἰτίων ἐπὶ τὰς δευτερουργοὺς ὑπουργίας ἀποφέροι τὸ τῆς μαντικῆς, οἷον κινήσεις σωμάτων ἢ παθῶν μεταβολὰς ἢ γενέσεις τινὰς ἑτέρας ἢ ζωῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ἐνεργείας ἢ λόγους ἐμψύχους ἢ φυσικοὺς τιθέμενος... ὑπολαμβάνοι τὴν ἀκρίβειαν ἀποδιδόναι περὶ αὐτῆς, τοῦ παντὸς διημάρτηκεν. Ἀλλ' εἷς ὅρος ὀρθὸς καὶ μία ἀρχὴ περὶ πάντων τοιούτων, μηδαμῶς ἀναιτίως παράγειν τὴν τοῦ μέλλοντος μαντείαν ἀπὸ τῶν μηδεμίαν ἐχόντων πρόγνωσιν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν θεῶν τῶν συνεχόντων ἐν αὑτοῖς τὰ πέρατα τῆς ὅλης εἰδήσεως τῶν ὄντων, ἀπὸ τούτων θεωρεῖν μεριζομένην τὴν μαντικὴν περὶ πάντα τὸν κόσμον ...Ἡ γὰρ τοιάδε ἀρχηγική τέ ἐστιν αἰτία καὶ διαφερόντως κοινοτάτη, ἔχουσά τε ἐν ἑαυτῇ πρώτως ἃ δίδωσι τοῖς μετέχουσιν ἑαυτῆς, καὶ μάλιστα ἀλήθειαν παρεχομένη ἧς δεῖ τῇ μαντικῇ ...
>
> *If someone, then, straying from the primary causes, downgrades the skill of divination to secondary operations* – position, for example, bodily movements or changes of emotions, or other happenings, either activities of human life or other psychic or physical explanations ... he has wholly erred in supposing that he has given an accurate account of divination. *There is one correct rule and one first principle concerning all these matters: that is, never to derive divination of the future from those things that have no foreknowledge as such, but to derive it from the gods* who in themselves possess the limits of all knowledge of existing things, from which the mantic power is distributed throughout the whole cosmos ... *For such a principal cause is not only primordial and eminently universal, but contains primarily within*

[17] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.1 (100.13–14); 3.15 (135.1–2); 3.16 (136.8–9).

[18] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.1 (99.9–100.6; 100.8–101.3; 101.2–3). Cf. Shaw (1998), 235.

> *itself whatever it gives to those sharing in it*, and especially furnishes the truth which divination needs ... [my emphasis][19]

Iamblichus emphasises that the gods are the the ultimate causes of divination, contrasting these primary causes (τῶν πρωτουργῶν αἰτίων) with the 'secondary operations' (τὰς δευτερουργοὺς ὑπουργίας) involved in divination, such as physical and psychic human activities. The latter are lower, subordinate causes necessary for the divinatory process, yet Iamblichus stresses their comparative unimportance in relation to the more significant role of the gods; the divine is the principal cause of divination because the eternal and universal nature of the gods is such that they possess all truth and knowledge, which informs μαντική, the knowledge of truth and of the past, present and future.[20] This accords with the Neoplatonist principle that all things are contained in potentiality in the eternal principles and causes from which they are derived, clearly elucidated in Proclus' *Elements of Theology*:

> Πᾶν τὸ τῷ εἶναι χορηγοῦν ἄλλοις αὐτὸ πρώτως ἐστὶ τοῦτο, οὗ μεταδίδωσι τοῖς χορηγουμένοις.
>
> Everything which by its existence bestows a character on others itself primitively possesses that character which it communicates to the recipients.[21]

According to Iamblichus, the principle and essential nature of divination is contained in potentiality within the gods; this explains to some extent the marked emphasis on the divine as the most significant cause of divination.[22] Throughout Book 3, Iamblichus repeatedly asserts the necessity of finding the cause, especially the primary cause, of different types of divination and divine inspiration.[23]

Viewed from this perspective, Iamblichus' comments show an integrated framework of the causation of divination: the gods are the ultimate cause of divination, and Iamblichus repeatedly emphasises this point since without the gods, there would be no divination or inspiration. Iamblichus clearly envisages a hierarchical scheme of causation in his exposition of divination, since he accepts that human beings do play a part in inspired divination – as auxiliary, subordinate

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[19] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.1 (101.7–102.6).

[20] Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 1.15 (47.1–3); 3.3 (106.11–108.5); 3.19 (146.5–9); 3.26 (164.1–4).

[21] Proclus, *ET* proposition 18; trs. Dodds (1933; repr. 1963).

[22] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.1 (102.3–8).

[23] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.1 (101.7–8; 101.13; 102.3–4); 3.3 (107.11–12); 3.8 (117.1; 117.7–8); 3.9 (118.1–2); 3.10 (120.11–12; 122.9–10; 123.6–8); 3.19 (146.5); 3.20 (148.4–7); 3.24 (156.5); 3.31 (175.14).

causes. Intriguingly, one of Iamblichus' philosophical predecessors also applies the notion of multiple and simultaneous causes in order to elucidate the operation of oracles: within *The Decline of Oracles* (*De defectu oraculorum*), Plutarch (who, as we have seen, was a priest at Delphi) also relies on a synthetic and multi-tiered framework of causation to explain the operation of the Delphic Oracle.[24] This framework is embedded within the dialogue, with each character suggesting a cause of the oracle, or criticising the previous speaker's conception of causation.[25] By the end of the dialogue, a multi-tiered scheme of causation has been applied to the operation of the Delphic Oracle, and a complex picture of causation emerges. Ammonius begins by arguing that Apollo is entirely responsible for giving oracles: he created prophecy and is responsible for its production and cessation.[26] Therefore, Ammonius posits that Apollo is the *only* cause of the production of oracles. Lamprias then refines Ammonius' argument, asserting that although Apollo is the *ultimate* cause of the production of oracles, lower causes such as Nature and matter often bring about the dissolution within the physical world of the work of the gods. Thus he implies that Apollo does not directly give oracles but works through intermediaries which are lower causes.[27] Cleombrotus continues this line of argument and examines one of these intermediary causes: *daimones* who act as guardians of the shrine.[28] Philip, Heracleon and Cleombrotus then commence a long discussion about the nature of *daimones*, clarifying the role of this intermediary cause in the production of oracles.[29] Later, Lamprias discusses the exhalations (τὰς ἀναθυμιάσεις) which dispose the soul of the Pythia to the spirit of inspiration (τὸ δ' ἐνθουσιαστικόν).[30] The role of this level of causation is then refined by the speakers, as Ammonius objects to the exhalations being the sole cause of the oracles, since this detracts from the reputation of the god.[31] As the final speaker, Lamprias clarifies the idea of multiple levels of causation operating simultaneously to produce oracles, attributing a simultaneous yet hierarchical role

[24] Plutarch, *De def. or.* trs. Babbit (1936; repr. 2003). Plutarch as a Platonist: Jones (1916; repr. 1980), 7, n. 1; Lamberton (2001), 26. Plutarch as a priest at Delphi: see Chapter 1, p. 13 and n. 55; Plutarch, *Quaestiones convivales* 700e8–10, ed. Sandbach (1961); *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum,* ed. Boeckh (1828–38), 171; Parke and Wormell (1956b), ix; Lamberton (2001), 52–54; 155. Possible indications that Plutarch served as priest at Delphi for over twenty years: Plutarch, *An seni*. 785c9–d5; 792f6–14, trs. Fowler (1927; repr. 1949).

[25] A key character in the dialogue, Lamprias, discusses the notion of multiple levels of simultaneous causation in relation to earlier philosophical views of causation using the 'metaphysic of prepositions': *De def. or.* 435f1–436a5; 436d5–8; 436c12–d4; 436d12–e11.

[26] *De def. or.* 413e1–414c8.

[27] *De def. or*. 414d2–e9.

[28] *De def. or.* 414f1–418d5; Johnston (2008), 46.

[29] *De def. or*. 418d7–421f2; Johnston (2008), 46.

[30] *De def. or*. 433c2–434c10; Johnston (2008), 46–47.

[31] *De def. or.* 435d10–e3.

to all of the possible causes discussed so far: Apollo, the *daimones*, the spirit of inspiration and exhalations and the soul of the Pythia.[32] In Plutarch's dialogues, the character with the final word usually represents the most satisfactory solution to a difficulty.[33] Lamprias' final speech certainly seems to fulfill this criterion, presenting the most satisfactory solution to the issue at hand: it reconciles all the previous explanations by attributing the oracles given at Delphi to a multiple scheme of causation. Lamprias is portrayed as the character who represents Plutarch's views, and is presented as a Platonist within the dialogue, adding to the impression that Lamprias' solution was Plutarch's most significant view on the causation of the Delphic Oracle.[34] Thus, Iamblichus seems to implicitly engage with Plutarch's Delphic dialogues, as evidenced by his implicit use of a framework of multiple yet simultaneous causes which are applied to the operation of oracles and to inspired divination more broadly.

From 3.20–25, Iamblichus gives a detailed exposition on the causality of divination in answer to Porphyry's challenges concerning the sole possible causes of divination.[35] Iamblichus' central point is not to deny that these human faculties have a role in divination; rather he argues that they are not the ultimate cause, a role reserved for the gods. They are subordinate, lower causes which have less importance than the ultimate cause; one must view divination in terms of its ultimate causation in order to understand its complete nature. Iamblichus constantly reiterates this fundamental point with examples of lesser causes. For example, he states that divine inspiration does not come solely from the *daimones* but from the gods and that it does not belong to the soul, intellect or one of their faculties, or to the body.[36] Although the latter do have a role in divination, they are auxiliary, lower causes, which need to be in a receptive, purified state in order to receive the inspiration of the god, who works through them.[37] The soul and body of the prophet must not disturb, interrupt, control or pervert the divine harmony which pervades them; otherwise the divine transmission or oracle will be distorted, misleading or even false.[38] Iamblichus' comments regarding the appropriate receptivity of the prophet are almost identical to those

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[32] *De def. or.* 436e11–437a11; Johnston (2008), 47.

[33] Cf. Brenk (1977), 85.

[34] *De def. or.* 431a; Brenk (1977), 114–115.

[35] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.20 (147.12–149.3); 3.21 (150.3–14); 3.22 (152.10–153.1; 153.8–13); 3.24 (156.5–11); 3.25 (160.1–11). Cf. Shaw (1998), 236, n. 42.

[36] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.7 (114.6–8; 114.13–115.2); 3.20 (148.5–149.10); 3.22 (152.9–153.13); 3.24 (156.5–157.4); 3.25 (158.3–159.4).

[37] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.7 (115.4–11). Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* 1.2.5 (982a25–29); 1.3.1 (983a24–32); 2.1.7 (993b26–31); 2.2.8–9 (994b6–16).

[38] Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 103–104; Iamblichus, *DM* 3.7 (115.8–11); 3.31 (176.11–177.10); 4.7 (190.14–191.1) attributes false oracles to *daimones* rather than gods (the context implies evil *daimones*).

of Plutarch, who also emphasised the importance of the prophet's soul being adjusted correctly to the spirit of inspiration: both philosophers explicitly assert that if the prophet's soul is disturbed or agitated, the resulting oracular utterance will be false, misleading or confusing.[39]

The comparative analysis of hierarchical levels of causation is particularly clear in Iamblichus' remark on the human race:

> μία δ' ἐστὶν ἐν αὐτῷ τῆς ἐνυπαρχούσης πλάνης καὶ ταραχῆς καὶ τῆς ἀστάτου μεταβολῆς ἰατρεία, εἴ τινα μετουσίαν θείου φωτὸς κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν μεταλάβοι· ὁ δὲ ταύτην ἀποκλείων ταὐτὸν ποιεῖ τοῖς ἐξ ἀψύχων ψυχὴν παράγουσιν ἢ τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνοήτων νοῦν ἀπογεννῶσι· καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸς ἀπὸ τῶν μὴ θείων τὰ θεῖα ἔργα ἀναιτίως ὑφίστησιν.
>
> There is one remedy for its inherent straying, confusion and unstable changing, and that is, if it participate as far as possible in some portion of the divine light. But whoever excludes this, does the same thing as they who produce a soul from things without a soul, or who would generate a mind from things mindless; for such a person postulates divine works without a cause from things not divine.[40]

This comment depends on the principle that the greater cannot be caused by that which is inferior to it, a vital principle which comprises a central foundation of Neoplatonic metaphysics.[41] Aristotle applied such a principle to his theory of causation: the higher a cause is, the greater its effect.[42] Iamblichus himself refers to this principle in his refutation of Porphyry's challenge that divine possession is the accomplishment of the human body or soul, 'nor is it the nature of the greater to be generated from the inferior' (... οὐδὲ πέφυκεν ἀπὸ τῶν χειρόνων τὰ κρείττονα ἀπογεννᾶσθαι.).[43] Proclus also states this principle, specifically formulating it in terms of causation, 'Every productive cause is superior to that which it produces' (Πᾶν τὸ παρακτικὸν ἄλλου κρεῖττόν ἐστι τῆς τοῦ παραγομένουφύσεως.).[44] Iamblichus' comment is also based on the Neoplatonist principle that 'like produces like', since μαντική consists of divine foreknowledge and so must ultimately be caused by divinity; this concept is specifically discussed in relation to the causation of divination:

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[39] Plutarch, *De Pyth. or*, 405a; *De def. or.* 414d2–9; 437d1–11; 438a3–c1; Iamblichus, *DM* 3.7 (115.8–11).

[40] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.18 (144.11–145.2).

[41] Cf. Dodds (1933; repr. 1963), 193.

[42] Aristotle, *Met.* 1.2.5. (982a25–29); 1.3.1 (983a24–32); 2.1.7 (993b26–31); 2.2.8–9 (994b6–16).

[43] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.8 (116.13–14).

[44] Proclus, *ET* proposition 7.

> πᾶν μὲν γὰρ τὸ γιγνόμενον ὑπ᾽ αἰτίου τινὸς γίγνεται, καὶ τὸ συγγενὲς ὑπὸ τοῦ συγγενοῦς ἀποτελεῖται, τὸ δὲ θεῖον ἔργον οὔτε αὐτόματόν ἐστιν (ἀναίτιον γὰρ τὸ τοιοῦτον καὶ οὐ πάντως τεταγμένον), οὔτε ἀπ᾽ ἀνθρωπίνης αἰτίας ἀπογεννᾶται· ἀλλότριον γὰρ καὶ τοῦτο καὶ ὑποδεέστερον, τὸ δὲ τελειότερον ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀτελοῦς οὐκ ἔχει δύναμιν παράγεσθαι. Πάντα ἄρα ἀπὸ θείας αἰτίας ἀποβλαστάνει τὰ προσόμοια αὐτῇ ἔργα φυόμενα.
>
> *For everything that happens arises from a specific cause, and what is kindred is produced by that which is kindred*, but the divine work is neither accidental (for such is without a cause, and not at all ordered) nor is it produced by a human cause. For this is alien to it, and subordinate; and that which is more perfect has no ability to be produced by that which is imperfect. *All things, then, that spring from a divine cause are works that are naturally akin to it* [my emphasis].[45]

The principle that 'like produces like' also informs Iamblichus' idea that the gods can use the human as an instrument in divination because the latter has developed their receptivity through assimilation to the divine.

Inductive Divination and Models of Causation

As we have seen, Iamblichus' constant emphasis on the ultimate cause of divination informs his definition of the two categories of divination: inspired and inductive, with the latter consequently seen as inferior. Iamblichus' account implies that the signs implanted in the natural world, such as the entrails of the sacrificial animal in haruspicy, are the Material cause of inductive divination. The *daimones* who implant the signs could be viewed as the Efficient cause of inductive divination, since they are responsible for placing such signs in the natural world.[46] Iamblichus' distinction between the modes of divination is based on his conception of their primary causes: inspired divination is ultimately caused by the gods whereas inductive divination ultimately depends upon human skill (τέχνη). Thus, the inferiority of inductive divination stems from human interpretation of the signs rather than from the nature of the signs *per se*. This is significant, for it is not the use of signs or tools in themselves which makes inductive divination inferior to the 'inspired' mode: it is the use of human supposition.[47] Iamblichus constantly reiterates that inductive divination

[45] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.20 (148.4–9). Cf. 5.20 (227.13–228.2).

[46] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.15 (135.10–136.4).

[47] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.17 (141.11–142.13), speaks positively of the role of inanimate objects in divination and compares their use to the use of children and 'simple-minded' human beings in divination, for by making such people utter statements full of wisdom it becomes clear to everyone that the divination is not a human but a divine accomplishment.

is inferior to inspired divination on the grounds that the inductive mode is mingled with corporeality and matter, whereas the inspired mode is entirely immaterial, eternal and pure:

> ἔστι μὲν οὖν ὁ τρόπος τῆς μαντείας οὗτος τοιοῦτος πάντῃ διεστηκὼς τοῦ θείου καὶ ἀληθινοῦ τρόπου, περὶ σμικρῶν τε καὶ ἐφημέρων πραγμάτων δυνάμενος προλέγειν, περὶ τῶν ἐν τῇ διηρημένῃ φύσει κειμένων ὅσα ἤδη περὶ τὴν γένεσιν ἐμφέρεται, κινήσεις τε ἀφ' ἑαυτῶν παρέχει τοῖς δυναμένοις αὐτὰς δέχεσθαι, καὶ πάθη πολυειδῶς ἐμποιεῖ τοῖς πεφυκόσιν ἐπιτηδείως εἰς τὸ συμπάσχειν· διὰ πάθους δὲ οὐκ ἂν παραγένοιτό ποτε ἡ τελεία πρόγνωσις· αὐτὸ γὰρ μάλιστα τὸ ἄτρεπτόν τε καὶ ἄυλον καὶ πάντῃ καθαρὸν τῷ μέλλοντι ἐπιβάλλειν εἴωθε, τὸ δὲ συμμιγνύμενον πρὸς τὸ ἀλόγιστον καὶ σκοτεινὸν τοῦ σωματοειδοῦς καὶ ὑλικοῦ πληροῦται πολλῆς ἀγνωσίας· ὅθεν οὐδέποτε τὴν τοιαύτην τεχνικὴν κατασκευὴν εἰς τὸ μαντεύεσθαι ἀποδέχεσθαι ἄξιον. Οὐδὲ χρῆσθαι αὐτῇ ἐπὶ μεγάλης σπουδῆς δεῖ, οὐδὲ ἄλλῳ χρωμένῳ πιστευτέον ὡς ἔχοντι παρ' ἑαυτῷ σαφὲς καὶ γνώριμόν τι τεκμήριον τῆς ἀληθείας.
>
> Therefore since such a mode of divination [i.e. inductive] is entirely different from the mode which is divine and true, it has the power to predict only trifling and everyday events, things which lie in the sphere of divided nature and directly concern generation, and which impart motions from themselves to those who are able to receive them, and create multifarious passions in things naturally fit for impassionment. Perfect foreknowledge, by contrast, is never achieved through passion. For it is that which is entirely immutable and also immaterial and entirely pure that is accustomed to apprehending future events; but that which is mingled with the irrationality and shadowiness of corporeal forms and matter is filled with abundant ignorance. Thus an artificial contrivance of this sort should in no way be valued as a mantic procedure. Nor should one even pay much regard to it, nor have confidence in another who makes use of it as if it possesses any kind of clear and proven sign of truth in its own right.[48]

Because of its inherent nature as a human endeavour, inductive divination can only predict everyday events, those directly concerned with the world of generation, in direct contrast with inspired divination which has the potential to bestow divine knowledge on those who utilise it. Iamblichus classifies haruspicy

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The contribution of the human to the divinatory message in the use of inductive divination: *DM* 6.4 (244.6–10).

[48] Iamblichus, *DM* 6.4 (244.10–245.7).

and augury as inductive divination, claiming that animals and birds are moved and transformed by the *daimon* which presides over them, as well as by the circulation of the air.[49] Given Iamblichus' approval of sacrifice in *De Mysteriis* 5, the philosopher's disparagement of haruspicy (a type of divination performed as part of the sacrificial ritual in Antiquity) as an example of the inferior type of divination seems strange and may indicate a tension in Iamblichus' account. However, it may be that Iamblichus sees haruspicy as a by-product or side effect of sacrifice, rather than as a central element of the ritual. Additionally, we have seen that Iamblichus' discussion of sacrifice is not limited to blood sacrifice but also includes intellectual and incorporeal modes of sacrifice, as well as non-blood material offerings.[50]

Iamblichus also classifies certain types of astrology (those which he calls 'technical') as inductive divination.[51] He also refers to the instinctive or inherent ability to predict future events as inductive divination and compares this to the way in which the foreknowledge of earthquakes occurs among animals; this instinctive ability arises from nature and contains nothing 'holy' (σεμνὸν) (that is, divine) or 'above nature' (ὑπερφυές).[52] Furthermore, inductive divination is comparable with the medical art and navigation at sea: all use deduction from signs, employing human reasoning or skilled observation, in order to form a diagnosis or prognosis.[53] This comparison clarifies Iamblichus' notion that inductive divination is inferior to the inspired mode because of the significant role of human supposition within it: inductive divination, like the medical art and navigation, may be able to use some degree of knowledge to grasp the future, but Iamblichus firmly distinguishes this from divine foreknowledge because it 'calculates the future from probabilities and estimates by certain signs, and these are not always trustworthy, nor, in like manner, do they have what is signified properly connected with that of which the signs are evidence' (...ἀναλογίζεται τὸ μέλλον καὶ σημείοις τισὶ τεκμηριοῦται καὶ τούτοις οὐκ ἀεὶ πιστοῖς οὐδ' ὡσαύτως συνηρτημένον ἔχουσι τὸ δηλούμενον, οὗπέρ ἐστι τὰ σημεῖα δείγματα.).[54] Iamblichus contrasts this mode of prognostication with divine foreknowledge, which is directed from a firm knowledge and an unshakeable assurance deriving from the causes (by which he means the gods).[55]

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[49] Haruspicy: *DM* 3.16 (136.9–14). Augury: *DM* 3.16 (136.14–137.7); 6.3 (243.2–244.5).

[50] Cf. Chapter 4, pp. 151–152; Iamblichus, *DM* 5.15 (219.5–220.1); 5.17 (222.15–223.3); 5.18 (224.5–225.9); 5.19 (226.3–14).

[51] Cf. Chapter 5, pp. 210–211; Iamblichus, *DM* 3.16 (137.8–138.1); 9.1 (273.2–9).

[52] Iamblichus, *DM* 10.3 (287.15–288.5; 288.11–289.2); 3.26 (162.2–7; 162.11–163.4).

[53] Iamblichus, *DM* 10.3 (288.5–289.2).

[54] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.26 (163.12–164.1).

[55] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.26 (164.1–4).

Inspired and Inductive Divination in Practice

Anthropologists have noted that the theoretical distinction often drawn between inspired and inductive modes of divination is not so noticeable or observable in practice: diviners often seem to move between the two modes during the course of the same ritual or divinatory session.[56] Certain evidence also suggests that lot divination (kleromancy, a form of inductive divination) was used alongside inspired divination at the Oracles of Delphi and Dodona.[57] Although Iamblichus firmly differentiates these modes of divination in a theoretical sense, there are hints in his account that he recognised a permeability and fluidity between them in practice. For example, he states that the signs used in inductive divination, 'when clearly seen, have derived a certain trace from divine divination in a greater or lesser degree' (... ταῦτα ἐναργῶς ὁρώμενα τῆς θείας μαντικῆς ἴχνος τι τὰ μὲν μᾶλλον τὰ δὲ ἧττον παρεσπάσατο) and 'an image of divine divination appears in them' (τῆς θείας μαντικῆς εἴδωλον τι... ἐν αὐτοῖς καταφαίνεται).[58] The connections drawn by Iamblichus between divine/inspired and inductive modes of divination are hardly surprising, given his insistence on the line of unbroken continuity which extends throughout the cosmos, connecting all things. Furthermore, Iamblichus states that when birds rend and kill each other, it is not a natural occurrence but a supernatural deed, suggesting a divine basis for signs observed in augury.[59] Significantly, Iamblichus concludes his account of the operation of inductive divination as follows, 'perhaps they [i.e. the gods] even awaken our understanding, by the same impulse to a greater acuteness' (ἴσως δὲ καὶ τὴν ἡμετέραν σύνθεσιν ἀπὸ τῆς αὐτῆς ἀφορμῆς εἰς ὀξύτητα πλείονα ἀνακινοῦσιν).[60] This suggests that certain inductive techniques or tools can help to engender a state of receptivity in the prophet which enables them to attain a state of divine inspiration and possession. In fact, Iamblichus' key criterion for distinguishing the modes of divination has little to do with the use (or lack thereof) of objects or tools in divination – it is rather the state of mind or consciousness experienced by the ritual practitioner:

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[56] Cf. for example, Tedlock (2007), 319–321.

[57] An inscription which regulates the tariff for lot divination at Delphi for the people of Sciathus: Amandry (1939), 184; Plutarch, *De fraterno amore* 492b2–11, ed. Helmbold (1939); Callimachus, *Hymn* 2.45 with scholia; Amandry (1950), 29–36; 84–85; 232–233; Parke (1967a), 85–88; 110; (1967b), 109–110; Fontenrose (1978), 219–224; Johnston (2008), 52–56.

[58] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.27 (164.8–9; 11–12), trs. Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell (2003), with emendations.

[59] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.16 (137.4–7); *VP* 13.62, states that bird and sky omens are 'special messages from the gods to those human beings truly dear to them' (ὅτι παρὰ θεῶν εἰσὶν ἀγγελίαι τινὲς καὶ ἀετοὶ τοῖς ὡς ἀληθῶς θεοφιλέσι τῶν ἀνθρώπων ...).

[60] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.15 (136.6–7); 3.26 (163.9–164.4).

if this is a divine state of consciousness sent directly by the gods, the divination is inspired, while if the ritual practitioner uses guesswork, deductive reasoning, skilled observation or discursive logic, the divination is inductive. Material objects often used in inductive divination, such as stones and barley meal, were also used by the theurgist as vessels for divine action: the difference is that the theurgist sought to connect these objects to higher causal principles and to use them to create a pure and integrated receptacle which is capable of receiving divine illumination.[61]

Divination by Statues (τελεστική)

Precisely this theurgic underpinning and rationale clarifies Iamblichus' attitude towards divination by statues (τελεστική), the central form of divination in Egyptian religious tradition.[62] Iamblichus vehemently condemns 'generators of effective images' (γεννητικοὺς τῶν δραστικῶν εἰδώλων) and the 'image-making art' (ἡ εἰδωλοποιητικὴ τέχνη) to such an extent that it has led Polymnia Athanassiadi to claim that he did not approve of divination by statues nor did he see it as a valid theurgic ritual.[63] Athanassiadi claims that Iamblichus' successors – Proclus, the emperor Julian and Maximus of Ephesus (who exhibited a positive attitude towards divination by statues and its central role within theurgic ritual) – misunderstood Iamblichus' views on the subject.[64] Yet, firstly, it is not absolutely clear what Iamblichus means exactly by the 'image-making art': this 'image' may refer to a cloud from incense burned over charcoal rather than a cult-statue.[65] Even if Iamblichus does refer to cultic statues when discussing the 'image-making art', he consistently refers to the 'images' as εἴδωλα and also frequently denigrates the practice as 'wonder-working' (θαυματουργία), a common designation for the practices of magicians and sorcerers in Antiquity.[66] But Iamblichus specifically condemns the practices of 'wonder-workers' rather than the consecration of statues *per se*, for in a passage which is generally taken to be the *locus classicus* of theurgic ritual, he states:

> Ταῦτα τοίνυν κατιδοῦσα ἡ θεουργικὴ τέχνη, κοινῶς τε οὑτωσὶ κατ' οἰκειότητα ἑκάστῳ τῶν θεῶν τὰς προσφόρους ὑποδοχὰς

[61] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.17 (141.11–142.3; 142.8–13); 5.23 (233.2–13).

[62] Cf. Chapter 1, p. 32–33, n. 171.

[63] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.28–29 (especially 167.8–11 and 168.10); Athanassiadi (1993), 122–123.

[64] Athanassiadi (1993), 123.

[65] Cf. Des Places (1966), 141, n. 3; Finamore (1993), 59–60, supported by Iamblichus, *DM* 3.29 (172.2–7).

[66] εἴδωλα: *DM* 3.28 (167.8–11; 168.10; 169.2; 170.5–6); 3.29 (171.4; 171.6; 172.2; 172.12); θαυματουργία: *DM* 3.29 (173.5–6); 3.30 (175.10). Cf. Finamore (1993), 59–60; Uzdavinys (2010), 169.

ἀνευρίσκουσα, συμπλέκει πολλάκις λίθους βοτάνας ζῷα ἀρώματα ἄλλα τοιαῦτα ἱερὰ καὶ τέλεια καὶ θεοειδῆ, κἄπειτα ἀπὸ πάντων τούτων ὑποδοχὴν ὁλοτελῆ καὶ καθαρὰν ἀπεργάζεται. Οὐ γὰρ δὴ δεῖ δυσχεραίνειν πᾶσαν ὕλην, ἀλλὰ μόνην τὴν ἀλλοτρίαν τῶν θεῶν, τὴν δὲ οἰκείαν πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἐκλέγεσθαι, ὡς συμφωνεῖν δυναμένην εἴς τε θεῶν οἰκοδομήσεις καὶ καθιδρύσεις ἀγαλμάτων καὶ δὴ καὶ εἰς τὰς τῶν θυσιῶν ἱερουργίας.

Observing this, and discovering in general, in accordance with the properties of each of the gods, the receptacles adapted to them, the theurgic art in many cases links together stones, plants, animals, aromatic substances, and other such things that are sacred, perfect and godlike, and then from all these composes an integrated and pure receptacle. One must not, after all, reject all matter, but only that which is alien to the gods, while selecting for use that which is akin to them, as being capable of harmonising with the construction of dwellings for the gods, the consecration of statues and indeed for the performance of sacrifical rites in general.[67]

The term used here for 'statue', ἄγαλμα, is the typical term applied to the cult statues of the gods in temples (particularly to cult statues within Egyptian temples used for divination), as well as the term typically used within theurgic contexts to delineate divination through statues.[68] This suggests that Iamblichus did indeed approve of divination through statues as a legitimate element of theurgic ritual. Iamblichus implies that the theurgists who consecrate statues know how to link the symbols (σύμβολα) together and to their divine causes in order to compose an integrated and pure receptacle which preserves the analogy with divine creation. Such a contrast between practitioners is explicitly drawn by Iamblichus in his criticism of the 'image-makers':

Ὥσπερ οὖν ἔχει τὸ ἀληθές, οὕτω δεῖ καὶ ἀποφαίνεσθαι, ὅτι δὴ αὐταῖς μὲν ταῖς περιφοραῖς ἢ ταῖς ἐνυπαρχούσαις ἐν αὐταῖς δυνάμεσιν ἢ ταῖς κατὰ φύσιν περὶ αὐτὰς ἐνιδρυμέναις οὔτε χρῆται εἰδωλοποιός, οὔθ' ὅλως δυνατός ἐστιν αὐτῶν ἐφάπτεσθαι· ταῖς δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς φύσεως αὐτῶν ἐσχάταις ἀπορρεούσαις ἐν τῷ φανερῷ

[67] Iamblichus, *DM* 5.23 (233.9–234.4). See also Iamblichus' positive reference to 'sacred statues' (ἱερὰ ἀγάλματα) in the context of traditional Graeco-Roman religion at *DM* 1.9 (30.12).

[68] Animated statues in Neoplatonism and Egyptian religion: Chapter 1, pp. 32–33, n. 171; Uzdavinys (2010), 84–87; 143–203, defines *agalma* as follows: 'image, cult-statue, ornament, shrine, object of worship … the word *agalma* contains no implication of likeness and is not a synonym of *eikon*' (279).

> περὶ τὸ τελευταῖον μέρος τοῦ παντὸς τεχνικῶς προσφέρεται, ἀλλ' οὐ θεουργικῶς.
>
> Then, in accordance with the truth, we must demonstrate that the image-maker does not use the astral revolutions or the powers inherent in them, or the powers found naturally around them, nor is he at all able to control them; rather he operates with these emanating last from nature in the visible (realm) about the extreme part of the universe, and does so purely by technical skill, and not by theurgic skill.[69]

Iamblichus explicitly contrasts the 'technical' skill of the wonder-worker, which operates only within the realm of nature (on the horizontal level) with theurgic skill (operating on a vertical axis by connecting material objects with their divine causes). Because the image-maker uses the lowest effluences of nature artificially rather than theurgically, he or she deals only with appearances which are unstable and thereby worthless for divination.[70] Iamblichus' specific criticisms of those who generate 'images' (εἴδωλα) clarifies this contrast:

> Ἀλλὰ τὸ ἁπλοῦν καὶ μονοειδὲς τῆς ἐνεργείας ἢ τῆς ὅλης συστάσεως ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐπικρατεῖ; παντὸς μὲν οὖν λείπει· κατὰ γὰρ τὴν φαινομένην σύνθεσιν ἐκ παντοδαπῶν καὶ ὑπεναντίων ποιοτήτων συμπεφόρηται. Ἀλλὰ δύναμίς τις ἀκραιφνὴς καὶ τελεία διαφανής ἐστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς; οὐδαμῶς. Ἐπεὶ πολλαχόθεν ἐπίκτητόν τι συγκεκρότηται τὸ τοιοῦτον πλῆθος τῶν ἀπορροιῶν ἀσθενὲς καὶ ἐξίτηλον ἐπιδεικνύμενον.
>
> Yet does the simplicity and the uniformity of the activity, or the composition of the whole (universe), dominate in them? They fail of it entirely: for, according to their apparent composition, they are a jumble of motley and incompatible qualities. But is no pure and perfect power manifest in them? Not at all! For such a multitude of emanations is heterogeneous and artificial, knocked together, showing itself to be feeble and fading.[71]

Unlike the theurgists, who preserve the analogy with divine creation and make a statue which is microcosmic (manifesting the whole universe) through symbols under the guidance of the gods, the wonder-workers are seen as hastily throwing together a jumble of incompatible materials, operating solely on the level of nature rather than seeking to contact, and consequently to manifest,

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69 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.28 (170.3–8).

70 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.28 (170.8–171.3); Finamore (1993), 59.

71 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.29 (171.10–172.1).

the gods. Indeed precisely this idea is confirmed by Iamblichus' claim regarding Pythagoras' consecration of statues of the gods:

> ...ἱσταμένους αὐτοὺς ἐν τοῖς ἀγάλμασι καὶ τῷ χαλκῷ, οὐ ταῖς ἡμετέραις συνεζευγμένους μορφαῖς, ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἱδρύμασι τοῖς θείοις, πάντα περιέχοντας καὶ πάντων προνοοῦντας καὶ τῷ παντὶ τὴν φύσιν καὶ τὴν μορφὴν ὁμοίαν ἔχοντας.
>
> ... setting them up, indeed, in the bronze of statues, not bound down with our human appearances, but with those divine rites of gods who comprehend and take thought for all things, and who have a substance and form similar to the All.[72]

Thus, Iamblichus clearly approves of the use of divination by statues (τελεστική) in theurgy: his successors Proclus, Julian and Maximus of Ephesus did not misunderstand his comments on the subject; rather, they faithfully follow Iamblichus in their enthusiastic endorsement of this method of divination in theurgy.[73] Yet one might still wonder why Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* contains so little discussion of the use of statue divination in theurgic ritual. The answer probably lies in Iamblichus' lost work, *On Cult Statues* (Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων), which presumably dealt with the use of statues for divination (τελεστική), as well as with their construction and prayers to be addressed to them.[74] It is likely that Iamblichus felt he had already dealt with the subject thoroughly (as, of course, had Porphyry in his work of the same title) and so avoids repetition. The dating of this work, as with *De Mysteriis*, is uncertain, but the lack of explicit discussion about statue divination in the latter work suggests that *On Cult Statues* was composed at an earlier date than *De Mysteriis*.[75]

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[72] Iamblichus, *VP* 28.151; Dillon and Hershbell (1991), 167, n. 33.

[73] Cf. for example, Proclus, *In. Parm*. 847, trs. Morrow and Dillon (1992), 228; Proclus, *In. Tim*. II.273.11. Maximus of Ephesus' animation of a statue of Hekate: Eunapius, *VS* 475. Damascius, *Philosophical History* F76e (describing late fifth-century Alexandria) reports as a sign of spiritual perfection that Heraiscus of Alexandria could tell the difference between a divine and a lifeless statue even at a distance.

[74] Cf. Dillon (1973; repr. 2009), 23, who cites Photius' description (*Bibl. Cod*. 215) of a refutation of this work by John Philoponus and asserts that it was no doubt written with reference to Porphyry's work of the same title (of which some extracts are preserved by Eusebius). Iamblichus may also have discussed the use of statue divination in his lost work *On the gods* (Περὶ θεῶν): cf. Dillon (1973; repr. 2009), 23, for details of this work. A possible reference to this work at *DM* 8.8 (271.9–13) would place this work before the latter.

[75] Iamblichus' *On Cult Statues* is tentatively dated by Dillon (1973; repr. 2009), 23, to c. A.D. 305–325 and *De Mysteriis* to an earlier period, c. A.D. 280. Yet Dillon admits that his dating is provisional: 'Any attempt to arrange the works of Iamblichus in definite chronological order at the present stage of research is rash in the extreme' (18). Others have

Inspired Divination: Oracles at Delphi, Didyma and Claros

Iamblichus' differentiation between levels of causation and firm emphasis on the primary cause of inspired divination are also apparent in his discussion of Oracles.[76] Following the order of Porphyry's list of examples of prominent oracular shrines, Iamblichus first discusses the operation of Apollo's Oracle at Claros, which prophesies by means of water. There is a spring in the subterranean chamber, from which the prophet drinks at appointed times. After performing many preliminary ceremonies and after drinking, he delivers his oracles.[77] Iamblichus concludes that it is obvious that the water has oracular power; his explanation of this concurs with his ideas about the causation of divination – the impassive and eternal activity of the god.[78] According to Iamblichus, the divine exercises its power by a process of illumination or emanation, giving prophetic power without any kind of detraction from itself, because of its eternal, unchanging and whole nature.[79] The illumination of the god needs a suitably prepared vehicle: all of the prophet's ritual preparations, such as fasting, meditation and seclusion, are required so that he will be receptive to the god's presence.[80] For example, Iamblichus states that the water from the spring bestows the purification and receptivity of the prophet's soul-vehicle so that it is able to receive the illumination from the god.[81] Iamblichus' statements concerning the Oracle at Claros show that the prophet himself is a lower cause of the oracle, since he utters the words of the oracle and therefore the divine transmission manifests through him, using him as an instrument. The water from the spring at Claros is also considered by Iamblichus to be a lower cause of the oracle, because it bestows the purification and receptivity of the prophet. However, Iamblichus continues to emphasise the primacy of the role of the divine which ultimately causes the prophet's state of inspiration.

A similar pattern can be traced in Iamblichus' comments on the Pythia at Delphi:

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proposed a later date (c. A.D. 300) for *De Mysteriis*: Saffrey (1971), 231–233; Athanassiadi (1993), 116, n. 13.

[76] Cf. Chapter 6, pp. 215–217; Sheppard (1993), 140.

[77] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (124.7–11).

[78] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (124.13–125.6).

[79] Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 3.12 (129.1–4); 3.19 (146.7–10). Finamore (1993), 59, refers to this as 'an interpenetration of the immaterial with the material, with no contamination of the immaterial element'.

[80] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (125.6–126.3).

[81] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (125.3–6), referring to the soul-vehicle as the 'luminous spirit in us' (ἐν ἡμῖν αὐγοειδοῦς πνεύματος). The role of the soul-vehicle in oracular ritual: cf. also Chapter 6, pp. 225–226.

> Ἡ δ' ἐν Δελφοῖς προφῆτις, εἴτε ἀπὸ πνεύματος λεπτοῦ καὶ πυρώδους ἀναφερομένου ποθὲν ἀπὸ στομίου θεμιστεύει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, εἴτε ἐν τῷ ἀδύτῳ καθημένη ἐπὶ δίφρου χαλκοῦ τρεῖς πόδας ἔχοντος χρηματίζει, εἴτε καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ τετράποδος δίφρου ὅς ἐστιν ἱερὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, πανταχῆ οὕτω δίδωσιν ἑαυτὴν τῷ θείῳ πνεύματι, ἀπό τε τῆς τοῦ θείου πυρὸς ἀκτῖνος καταυγάζεται... ὅταν δ' εἰς ἕδραν ἐνιδρυθῇ τοῦ θεοῦ, τῇ σταθερᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ μαντικῇ δυνάμει συναρμόζεται· ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων δὲ τῶν τοιούτων παρασκευῶν ὅλη γίγνεται τοῦ θεοῦ. Καὶ τότε δὴ πάρεστιν αὐτῇ χωριστῶς ὁ θεὸς ἐπιλάμπων, ἕτερος ὢν καὶ τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος καὶ τῆς ἰδίας ἕδρας καὶ πάσης τῆς περὶ τὸν τόπον φυσικῆς καὶ ἱερᾶς φαινομένης κατασκευῆς.
>
> The prophetess at Delphi, however, whether she gives oracles to human beings from a subtle and fiery spirit brought up from an aperture, or prophesies in the innermost sanctuary while seated on a bronze stool with three legs, or on a seat with four legs that is sacred to the god, she thus gives herself absolutely to the divine spirit, and is illuminated by the ray of divine fire ... whenever she is found on the seat of the god, she is in harmony with the divine, unwavering oracular power. And as a result of both these preparations she becomes wholly the god's possession. Then, indeed, the god is present, shining on her separately, being himself other than the fire, the spirit, the particular abode, and all the physical and sacred trappings appearing in connection with the place.[82]

Iamblichus' repeated use of the word εἴτε ('whether ... or') when discussing the ritual preparations undertaken by the Pythia serves to highlight their inferiority as a cause of oracles in comparison with the supreme power of the deity. As with the prophet at Claros, the divine causes the oracular inspiration itself; the preparations undertaken by the prophetess are simply instrumental in causal terms, preparing her soul to be receptive enough to receive the inspiration and illumination of the divinity. Like the prophet at Claros, the Pythia is implicitly viewed by Iamblichus as a secondary 'instrumental' cause of her oracular utterances, which are ultimately caused by the god using her as an instrument. Similarly, Iamblichus discusses the prophetess at the Oracle of Didyma, who gives oracles either by holding the staff first given by a certain god, or by sitting on the axle, or by dipping her feet in or inhaling water from the spring: these ritual preparations enhance the receptivity (ἐπιτηδεία) of the prophetess, preparing her to receive the god 'from without' (ἔξωθεν).[83]

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[82] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (126.4–9; 126.11–127.3).

[83] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (127.4–9). The 'axle' at Didyma: Fontenrose (1988), 80–83; Parke (1985), 212.

Athanassiadi has argued that Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* played a decisive role in shifting the locus of the divine from oracles to inspired individuals, particularly a new type of holy man: the Pythagorean sage. She argues that 'this new axiom of hieratic Platonism' was that 'there are no holy places but only holy individuals'.[84] As she states, Athanassiadi is clearly influenced by the scholarship of Peter Brown, whose thesis that the rise of the holy man dominated the religious landscape of Late Antiquity has gained wide currency.[85] She maintains that oracles obtained in private ritual and *oneiromancy*, catalysed by theurgy, dominated Late Antiquity and superseded oracle-centres, claiming that Iamblichus espouses this view in *De Mysteriis*: 'he [i.e. Iamblichus] tried hard to disassociate it [i.e. theurgy] both from fraudulent practices and from the compromised oracular mainstream'.[86] While Iamblichus does attempt to differentiate theurgy from fraudulent practices, Athanassiadi's comments on Iamblichus' valuation of oracles need to be qualified, at the very least.

As we have seen, Iamblichus discusses the traditional Oracles (Didyma, Delphi and Claros) with great respect, describing the way in which the inspiration of the god (Apollo) is received by the prophet(ess) at the specific oracular site. Iamblichus' discussion of oracular sanctuaries needs to be taken within the context of his exposition of the causation of divination: we have seen that Iamblichus' *apparent* disparagement of the physical cultic objects and paraphernalia associated with specific oracle sites actually represents his *emphasis* on their lower, subordinate role in his scheme of causation. The cultic paraphernalia are lower, auxiliary causes in the operation of oracles: it is the divine which is the ultimate cause. Thus, Iamblichus' exposition does not privilege person over place, as Athanassiadi claims, since the philosopher allows both a role in the causation of oracles, but a subordinate role in comparison with the gods. Rather, the divine is privileged over person *and* place. This is confirmed by Iamblichus' words immediately following his account of Oracles:

> Φαίνεται δὴ οὖν καὶ ἡ τῶν χρηστηρίων μαντεία συνομολογοῦσα ταῖς ὅλαις ὑποθέσεσιν ἃς προειρήκαμεν περὶ τῆς μαντικῆς... Εἰ δὴ ταῦτα ὀρθως εἰρήκαμεν, ὑπ' οὐδενὸς οὔτε τόπου οὔτε μεριστοῦ σώματος ἀνθρωπίνου οὔτε ψυχῆς κατεχομένης ἐν ἑνὶ εἴδει μεριστῶν περιείληπται μεριστῶς ἡ μαντικὴ τῶν θεῶν δύναμις, χωριστὴ δ' οὖσα καὶ ἀδιαίρετος ὅλη πανταχοῦ πάρεστι τοῖς μεταλαμβάνειν αὐτῆς δυναμένοις, ἔξωθέν τε ἐπιλάμπει καὶ πληροῖ πάντα, δι' ὅλων τε τῶν στοιχείων διαπεφοίτηκε, γῆν

[84] Athanassiadi (1992), 59–62; (1993), 123–124.
[85] Athanassiadi (1992), 58. Cf. Brown (1971a), 99–100.
[86] Athanassiadi (1993), 123; 115–117; 123–124; 127.

τε καὶ ἀέρα καὶ πῦρ καὶ ὕδωρ κατείληφεν, οὐδέν τε ἄμοιρον ἑαυτῆς ...

> It is clear, then, that the divination of oracles is consonant with all the suppositions that we expounded previously about prophetic inspiration ... If then, we have stated these things correctly, the divinatory power of the gods is bounded by nothing divisible, neither by place, nor by a divisible human body, nor by a soul contained in any single form of divisible entities, but being separate by itself and indivisible, it is wholly present everywhere to those able to share in it. And it both illuminates from without and fills all things, and permeates all the elements: it embraces both earth, air, fire and water, and leaves nothing deprived of itself ...[87]

Iamblichus reiterates the main philosophical argument of his discussion of oracles: the divinatory power of the gods, which *ultimately* causes divination, is not contained within people or places; rather it illuminates and permeates both with no detraction from itself. It is vital to remember that in his exposition of the operation of oracle sites, Iamblichus was mainly concerned to answer the questions of Porphyry, who had stated 'Some are inspired while drinking water, like the priest of Clarian Apollo in Colophon; others while sitting near apertures like the women who prophesy at Delphi; others while inhaling vapours from waters, like the prophetesses of the Branchidai' (οἱ δὲ ὕδωρ πιόντες, καθάπερ ὁ ἐν Κολοφῶνι ἱερεὺς τοῦ Κλαρίου, οἱ δὲ στομίοις παρακαθήμενοι, ὡς αἱ ἐν Δελφοῖς θεσπίζουσαι, οἱ δ' ἐξ ὑδάτων ἀτμιζόμενοι, καθάπερ αἱ ἐν Βραγχίδαις προφήτιδες).[88] Iamblichus' exposition on oracles demonstrates his concern that this question implies that these ritual and cultic accessories are the distinguishing feature and primary cause of oracles.[89] Thus, his account emphasises the fact that the primary cause of oracles is the divine inspiration of the gods; however, these cultic paraphernalia are still considered important as vital ritual preparations which purify and enhance the receptivity of the prophet(ess), thus allowing him or her to receive divine inspiration.[90]

Are Oracular Sanctuaries 'Hotbeds' of Receptivity?

Although Iamblichus privileges the divine over person *and* place in his account of Oracles, it is interesting to consider whether there is anything intrinsically sacred about oracular sanctuaries or their relationship to their respective deity in

87 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.12 (128.4–5; 129.1–7).
88 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (123.11–124.1).
89 Cf. the comments of Clarke (2001), 58.
90 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (125.3–6; 125.11–126.3; 126.12–13; 127.10–15).

his philosophy. Athanassiadi claims that, for Iamblichus, oracular sancturies were sacred historically rather than theologically, because of their original association with the god.[91] Yet Iamblichus had raised the problem as to how the gods are said to receive the allotment of certain places according to determinate times, in relation to Plato's *Timaeus* 23d which asserts that Athena received Athens first and Sais later. Iamblichus' solution is that the allotments of the gods stand eternal, but those things that partake of them sometimes enjoy the influence of their divine rulers and at other times are deprived of it, and these are the participations measured in time, which the sacred laws refer to as the birthdays of the gods.[92] In other words, while specific places are always allotted to specific gods, human participation in the powers of these gods at these specific locations changes. This exposition neatly explains the historical changes in the patronage of specific sanctuaries from one deity to another, but also demonstrates that, for Iamblichus, specific locations are somehow always allotted to specific deities: this allotment is therefore not historical, but in some sense inherent to the respective deity.

Moreover, while Iamblichus primarily envisages receptivity (ἐπιτηδειότης) as operating through human beings rather than through place (since all places contain the immanent illuminations of the gods), his account may imply that he considers oracular sanctuaries to be 'hotbeds' (or powerful centres) of receptivity (ἐπιτηδειότης). Although this notion is somewhat speculative, it may well be that both the long-established traditions (spanning centuries of praxis) of ritual practices undertaken regularly at religious and especially oracular sanctuaries, as well as the large numbers of priests and priestesses closely involved with these sanctuaries (constantly striving to cultivate their receptivity), make them especially 'receptive' locations.[93] If the importance of developing receptivity as a lifelong endeavour is considered, as well as Iamblichus' emphasis on the importance of long-established tradition, endurance and continual striving in developing receptivity, then oracular sanctuaries would consequently seem to be envisaged as powerful centres of receptivity.[94] This view is also implied by Iamblichus'

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[91] Athanassiadi (1993), 124.

[92] Iamblichus, *In Tim*. 1, F14, trs. Dillon (1973; repr. 2009). Cf. also *DM* 1.9 (33.5–8), which states that the participants (in divine influences) are in each case of such a nature that they participate in them through the medium of aether, air or water; it is by observing this that the art of divine works makes use of correspondences. Given the importance of the oracular spring in most oracular sanctuaries, Iamblichus clearly conceives of oracular sancturies and their priesthoods as engendering receptivity in the prophet(ess) by means of water.

[93] Cf. Iamblichus' defence of the 'unknowable names' used in religious invocations, which rests on the immutability of sacred cultic practices and the consequent need to preserve prayers and invocations intact with no alteration: *DM* 8.5 (258.12–259.4).

[94] Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 3.13 (131.4–9); 3.31 (176.11–13); Chapter 1, pp. 26–28; 37 and n. 196.

account of Pythagoras' teaching methods: after setting out Pythagoras' general manner of teaching, including testing and examination of would-be students and followers, Iamblichus notes that Pythagoras taught Abaris the Scythian in a different way.[95] Instead of a lengthy course of instruction, testing and the five-year silence required of most followers, Pythagoras judged him immediately fit to learn his doctrines because he was a priest of Apollo among the Hyperboreans, and because he was also an old and wise man.[96] Iamblichus' later comments make it clear that Abaris was a prophet of Apollo who practised divination.[97] This account suggests that Iamblichus considered prophets to have engendered and cultivated their receptivity, further suggesting the possibility that oracular sanctuaries were envisaged as powerful centres of receptivity.

Inspired and Inductive Divination: Dreams

Iamblichus' distinction between inspired and inductive divination, or divine and human divination, is also clearly evident in his discussion of dream divination (*oneiromancy*), which was well-known and common in Antiquity.[98] Iamblichus explores the nature of dream divination in response to Porphyry's inquiry about divination in sleep:

> ὅτι δὴ καθεύδοντες δι' ὀνείρων τοῖς μέλλουσι πολλάκις ἐπιβάλλομεν οὐκ ἐν ἐκστάσει μὲν γιγνόμενοι πολυκινήτῳ (ἥσυχον γὰρ κεῖται τὸ σῶμα), αὐτοῖς μέντοι γε ὡς ὕπαρ οὐκέτι παρακολουθοῦντες.
>
> When asleep, we often encounter, by means of dreams, things in the future; although we are no longer in an agitated ecstasy (for the body remains at rest), we certainly are no longer conscious of things as when in a wakeful state.[99]

Porphyry's challenge questions dream divination on the basis that human consciousness in sleep is inferior to waking consciousness. Iamblichus responds that the characteristics of dreams which Porphyry mentions may be correct for 'human' dreams, those which arise from the soul, from *phantasia* or the imagination. Here Iamblichus makes a clear and strong differentiation between 'human' dreams and dreams that are 'god-sent' (θεόπεμπτοι), or, in other

[95] Iamblichus, *VP* 19.90.

[96] Iamblichus, *VP* 19.90–91. Cf. also *VP* 28.135; 32.215–217.

[97] Iamblichus, *VP* 19.93. Cf. also *VP* 28.19.135–136; 28.147.

[98] For a similar approach to the distinction between dreams in Iamblichean writings cf. Finamore (1998), 155–164; Shaw (1995), 81–82; (1998), 225–267. Cf. also Chapter 6, pp. 215–216.

[99] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.2 (102.12–103.2).

words, divine. In doing so, he follows traditional Greek conceptions of dreams: such a differentiation can be traced back as far as Homer and is echoed by Virgil.[100] Iamblichus' account of their characteristics and nature makes it apparent that he considers these two types of dreams (divine and human) to fall neatly into the two modes of divination: inductive and inspired.

Iamblichus' describes 'human' dreams (ἀνθρωπίνων ὀνείρων) as 'things coming from the soul, either from thoughts or words stirred up in us, or in such things as arise from our fantasies, or from everyday concerns of some kind' (...τῶν ἀπὸ ψυχῆς, ἢ τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν ἐννοιῶν ἢ λόγων ἀνακινουμένων, ἢ ὅσα ἀπὸ φαντασιῶν ἐγείρεται ἤ τινων μεθημερινῶν φροντίδων).[101] The primary cause of 'human' dreams is considered to be purely human, linking them with inductive divination, of which the primary cause is human skill. Iamblichus' account of the nature of 'human' dreams combines Plato's statements about dreams in the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*: in the *Republic*, Plato discusses the possible effects which the rational soul can have on dreams. If the rational soul is asleep, dreams aroused by our lower natures, the appetitive part of the soul which contains desires, result. If the rational soul has control over lower parts, then even in sleep it carries on thinking unimpeded, grasps truth and is without unlawful visions.[102] In the *Timaeus*, Plato states that dreams are images internal to the body.[103] Iamblichus indicates that 'human' dreams originate ultimately from human faculties: from the human soul (agreeing with the *Republic*), imagination or from everyday concerns, recalling Plato's differentiation between the rational soul and the irrational.[104] Plato maintains that when one sleeps with their rational soul in control, one is most likely to grasp truth.[105] Iamblichus recalls and follows this statement:

> ἃ τότε μέν ἐστιν ἀληθῆ τότε δὲ ψευδῆ, καὶ ἐπί τινων μὲν τυγχάνει τοῦ ὄντος, ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν πολλῶν ἀποτυγχάνει.
>
> Sometimes these things are true, sometimes false; and in some cases, they chance upon reality but, in many cases, they fail to attain reality.[106]

The word τυγχάνει implies the notion that these kinds of dreams operate via some aspect of human guesswork or deduction which originates in the human

[100] Homer, *Odyssey* 19.560–567, ed. Murray (1919; repr. 2003), Vol. 2; Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.893–896, ed. Rushton Fairclough (1916; repr. 1978), Vol. 1. Cf. Clarke (2003), 121, n. 155.

[101] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.2 (103.2–5).

[102] Plato, *Resp.* 571c–d. Cf. Finamore (1998), 155–156.

[103] Plato, *Ti.* 45d3–46a2.

[104] Cf. Finamore (1998), 156.

[105] Plato, *Resp*. 572a7–b1; Finamore (1998), 156.

[106] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.2 (103.5–6).

soul or imagination. Thus, Iamblichus' account of the operation of 'human' dreams matches his description of inductive divination, which arises as a result of human estimation.[107] Thus, according to Iamblichus' schema, 'human' dreams fall into the category of inductive divination, since both 'human' dreams and inductive divination are inferior to divine dreams and inspired divination respectively because the former ultimately originate from human faculties (which can only attain to a partial and limited knowledge) or skills, rather than being derived directly from divinity (as the latter are).

Iamblichus elucidates the nature of divine dreams, which he describes as θεόπεμπτοι (god-sent): they occur during transitional states of sleeping and waking and vice versa (as well as when one is wholly awake), when a sudden voice is heard offering guidance about the future.[108] Iamblichus' assertion that one can receive a god-sent dream while fully awake implies the experience of a trance state.[109] Sometimes a light shines brightly and peacefully (clearly a reference to divine illumination), while at other times an intangible and incorporeal spirit (πνεῦμα) encircles those lying down.[110] In both cases, the dreamer is aware of the light or the 'spirit' (πνεῦμα) and receives a true, divinatory dream.[111] In the latter case, this 'spirit' is not visually perceptible, according to Iamblichus, but is otherwise perceptible with a different kind of consciousness and awareness.[112] Iamblichus explicitly comments about this 'spirit' that, 'When entering, it makes a whooshing sound' (... ῥοιζομένου τε ἐν τῷ εἰσιέναι ...).[113] The use of ῥοῖζος here is intriguing, since this term is a Pythagorean and Chaldean term for the sound caused by the planetary revolutions.[114] Fragment 37 of the *Chaldean Oracles* describes the Ideas as 'whirring forth' (ῥοιζέω) from the Paternal Intellect into the womb of Hekate.[115] At least from the time of Plato's *Timaeus*, the music or harmony of the spheres was connected closely with the creation and function of the Cosmic Soul, which may possibly be identified with Hekate in the *Chaldean*

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[107] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.15 (135.1–2; 9–10).

[108] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.2 (103.6–11). Clarke (2003), 123, n. 157, notes that the semi-conscious state between sleeping and waking, during which hallucinations are common, has been identified by twentieth-century psychologists as the 'hypagognic state'. The 'sudden voice' may well be an allusion to Plato, *Phdr.* 242c1–2, where Socrates reports that he seemed 'suddenly to hear a certain voice' (τινὰ φωνὴν ἔδοξα αὐτόθεν ἀκοῦσαι). Cf. Clarke (2003), 123, n. 156; Finamore (1998), 158.

[109] Cf. Finamore (1998), 158.

[110] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.2 (103.11–12; 104.4–5). Cf. Shaw (1995), 89.

[111] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.2 (104.5–8); Finamore (1998), 158.

[112] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.2 (103.11–104.1).

[113] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.2 (104.1–2).

[114] See *Chald. Or.* F37; F146; Proclus, *In. Remp.* 2.76.20–21; Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 19, n. 46. Cf. Clarke (2003), 141, n. 188.

[115] *Chald. Or.* F37.

Oracles.[116] It is also interesting that the term for a ritual tool used in Chaldean rites and associated with Hekate, Hekate's Top, or στρόφαλος, was also used within astronomy: the word 'στροφάλιγξ' can mean 'planetary orbit.'[117] Iamblichus relates that Pythagoras purified the confused minds of his disciples, sending them into a prophetic sleep with his musical imitations of the celestial spheres.[118] It is especially interesting that Iamblichus links this particular sound with the induction of a prophetic sleep, just as here it is linked with a prophetic spirit (πνεῦμα) encircling the individual while they are asleep as a mediatory force for the conveyance of divine dreams to humans. Clearly, by using the term ῥοῖζος, Iamblichus signifies a profound change of consciousness in the ritual practitioner, whereby through divine illumination they become aware of the 'sounds' of the whole cosmos; this notion matches his descriptions of divination as attaining a divine life and perspective, where all things are seen as 'present.'[119] Iamblichus also uses the term ῥοῖζος in his discussion of divine possession among the devotees of Cybele, Sabazios and the Corybantes during the performance of musical rituals. In elucidating the operation of such rituals, Iamblichus asserts that the sounds and tunes are properly consecrated to each of the gods, and kinship is properly assigned to them in accordance with their proper orders and powers and the motions in the universe itself and 'the harmonious sounds rushing from its motions' (τὰς ἀπὸ τῶν κινήσεων ῥοιζουμένας ἐναρμονίους φωνάς).[120]

Inspired Divination and Theurgy in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*

Inspired Divination and Theurgy

Iamblichus contrasts the scope, utility and accuracy of inspired and inductive modes of divination, with inspired divination clearly seen as the superior mode. Because of its closer proximity to divinity, inspired divination is the appropriate form of divination for the theurgist, as Iamblichus states near the culmination of his treatise, 'Only divine mantic prediction, therefore, conjoined with the gods, truly imparts to us a share in divine life ...' (Μόνη τοίνυν ἡ θεία μαντικὴ συναπτομένη τοῖς θεοῖς ὡς ἀληθῶς ἡμῖν τῆς θείας ζωῆς μεταδίδωσι ...).[121] Iamblichus' utilisation of philosophical concepts of causation (particularly the concept of simultaneous and hierarchical causes) demonstrates the rational and philosophical basis of Iamblichus' explanation of divination and

116 Johnston (1990), 101, n. 31; 104; 108.
117 Johnston (1990), 101, n. 31.
118 Iamblichus, *VP* 15.65.3; trs. Clark (1989). Cf. Clarke (2003), 141, n. 188.
119 Cf. for example, Iamblichus, *DM* 3.3 (107.11–108.3).
120 Iamblichus, *DM* 3.9 (118.13–119.3).
121 Iamblichus, *DM* 10.4 (289.3 –4).

theurgy. Theurgy relies ultimately on the divine. Inspired divination forms a central part of theurgic ritual. Thus, by showing the ultimate divine cause of divination, Iamblichus explains the purpose of using inspired divination in theurgic ritual and also emphasises the similarity between inspired divination and theurgy: both are caused by and derived from the gods. Iamblichus concludes his account of divination as follows:

> Ἓν οὖν τοῦτό ἐστι τὸ ἄρχαντον καὶ ἱερατικὸν θεῖόν τε ὡς ἀληθῶς γένος τῆς μαντείας...ἀλλ' αὐτὸ ἐξήρηται πάντων, ὑπερφυὲς ἀίδιον προϋπάρχον, οὐδὲ παράθεσίν τινα ἐπιδεχόμενον οὔτε ὑπεροχήν τινος ἐν πολλοῖς προτεταγμένην· ἀλλ' ἀπολέλυται καὶ καθ' ἑαυτὸ μονοειδὲς πάντων προηγεῖται...ἐκ γὰρ τοῦ τοιούτου τρόπου παραγίγνεται ἅμα τε καὶ ἐν ταῖς μαντείαις ἡ ἄπταιστος ἀλήθεια καὶ ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἡ τελεία ἀρετή. Μετὰ τούτων δὲ ἀμφοτέρων δίδοται τοῖς θεουργοῖς ἡ πρὸς τὸ νοητὸν πῦρ ἄνοδος, ὃ δὴ καὶ τέλος δεῖ πάσης μὲν προγνώσεως πάσης δὲ θεουργικῆς πραγματείας προτίθεσθαι.
>
> *This, then, is one kind of mantic, which is undefiled and sacerdotal, and truly divine*...But it is itself entirely removed from all, supernatural, and eternally pre-existent, neither admitting any comparison nor pre-eminence among many; it is free from all this, and takes precedence over all according to its uniform self ... *For in such a fashion arises, at the same time, both infallible truth in oracles, and perfect virtue in souls. With both of these, ascent to the intelligible fire is granted to theurgists, a process which indeed must be proposed as the goal of all foreknowledge and of every theurgic operation.* [my emphasis].[122]

The highest stage of inspired divination is intrinsically linked with theurgy, forming an essential element of theurgic ritual. Inspired divination is the level of vision and insight ideally attained by the theurgist when performing theurgic ritual: the theurgist becomes a prophet(ess) (μάντις) and utters oracles.[123] Iamblichus asserts that the two prerequisites for noetic ascent are the infallible truth of oracles and perfect virtue in the soul. His description of ascent is couched in Chaldean terminology: 'intelligible fire' is the typical description of the noetic realm within the *Chaldean Oracles*. This ascent of consciousness allows the theurgist to become divinised by enabling him or her to ascend to the noetic realm (and beyond) and to subsequently express their noetic vision by uttering oracles. Thus, the role of inspired divination within theurgy is

[122] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.31(178.13–14; 178.15–179.3; 179.4–8).

[123] Proclus' definition of theurgy highlights the role of divination within it: *Plat. Theol.* 1.25 (Saffrey and Westerink); Chapter 1, pp. 25–26. Cf. Shaw (1995), 231–232; 236.

soteriological: it is 'a stage on the way to mystical union'.[124] Simultaneously, the inspired divination of the theurgist is a sign of mystical union and vision. The goal of inspired divination as used within theurgy was divinisation: the theurgist attempted to ascend to the noetic realm and beyond, in order to achieve union with the divine and to fully awaken to his or her own divinity.[125] The theurgist's goal is to become like god through assimilation: thus, a key 'sign' and expression of divine communion and union is to speak the words of a god. The theurgist utters his or her own oracles. In this sense, theurgic divination has much in common with Eastern practices of meditation: it is envisaged as a transformation of the soul and of consciousness. Thus, theurgic divination is intimately related to divinisation, making the soul divine, and knowledge of the future is merely a secondary or subordinate consequence of this type of divination.[126] In order to understand how Iamblichus conceptualises theurgic divination, it is crucial to examine his views on theurgy as the concurrent expression of the goodness of the gods and the means for liberation from fate.

Theurgy and Liberation from Fate

This idea of the simultaneous transcendence and immanence of the divine underlies Iamblichus' claims that the gods are both liberators of fate and bringers of fate and that human beings can transcend the bonds of fate (ἡ εἱμαρμένη) through theurgic ascent:

> Οὐκέτι δὴ οὖν, ὃ σὺ ἀπορεῖς, δεσμοῖς ἀλύτοις ἀνάγκης, ἣν εἱμαρμένην καλοῦμεν, ἐνδέδεται πάντα· ἔχει γὰρ ἀρχὴν οἰκείαν ἡ ψυχὴ τῆς εἰς τὸ νοητὸν περιαγωγῆς καὶ τῆς ἀποστάσεως μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν γιγνομένων ἐπὶ δὲ τὸ ὂν καὶ τὸ θεῖον συναφῆς. Οὐδ' αὖ τοῖς θεῖος τὴν εἱμαρμένην ἀνήψαμεν, οὓς ὡς λυτῆρας τῆς εἱμαρμένης ἔν τε ἱεροῖς καὶ ξοάνοις θεραπεύομεν. Ἀλλ' οἱ μὲν θεοὶ λύουσι τὴν εἱμαρμένην, αἱ δ' ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἔσχαται φύσεις καθήκουσαι καὶ συμπλεκόμεναι τῇ γενέσει τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τῷ σώματι τὴν εἱμαρμένην ἐπιτελοῦσιν· εἰκότως ἄρα τοῖς θεῖος ἁγιστείαν πᾶσαν προσάγομεν, ὅπως ἂν μόνοι διὰ πειθοῦς νοερᾶς τῆς ἀνάγκης ἄρχοντες τὰ ἀπὸ τῆς εἱμαρμένης ἀποκείμενα κακὰ ἀπολύωσιν.

[124] Athanassiadi (1993), 120.

[125] Divinisation in Greek philosophy: O'Meara (2003), 31–39; 123–131; Shaw (1995), 232; 234.

[126] Cf. Shaw (1995), 232–233; Uzdavinys (2010), 198–199.

> It is not, then, after all, the case, as you suggest in your query, that 'all things are bound together by the indissoluble bonds of necessity,' which we call fate; for the soul contains its own principle of conversion to the intelligible, and of detachment from the realm of generation, and also of union with true being and the divine. Nor yet have we linked fate to the gods, whom indeed we worship by means of temples and statues as liberators from fate. But while the gods free us from fate, the lowest level of natures which descend from them and interweave themselves with the generative processes of the cosmos and with body do bring about fate. It is reasonable then, that we should bestow all worship upon the gods, in order that, being the only ones who can dominate necessity by means of rational persuasion, they may free us from the evils that lie in wait for us from fate.[127]

Iamblichus maintains that since the gods are transcendent they are superior to necessity and, by implication, fate, which he defines as the workings of necessity in the cosmos. Yet the gods' immanence throughout the cosmos entails that the emanations from them do manifest on a lower ontological level as fate and necessity in the physical cosmos. In this metaphysical schema, necessity and fate are a manifestation of divine providence on a lower ontological level, as Iamblichus states elsewhere:

> ...πάντα οὕτω τὰ τῆς εἱμαρμένης συνῆπται πρὸς τὴν προηγουμένην πρόνοιαν. κατ' αὐτὴν τὴν οὐσίαν ἄρα ἐπιπλέκεται ἡ εἱμαρμένη τῇ προνοίᾳ καὶ τῷ εἶναι τὴν πρόνοιάν ἐστιν ἡ εἱμαρμένη καὶ ἀπ' αὐτῆς καὶ περὶ αὐτὴν ὑφέστηκε.
>
> ...the whole sum of things subject to Fate is thus connected to the dominance of Providence. In its very substance, then, Fate is enmeshed with Providence, and Fate exists by virtue of the existence of Providence, and it derives its existence from it and within its ambit.[128]

Yet through theurgic divination and ritual, Iamblichus claims that the human being can be liberated from fate. What exactly does Iamblichus mean by 'liberation from fate'?

Here, it is important to note Iamblichus' related claim that the gods' ordinance laid down 'from the beginning' that every human soul should eventually ascend to the divine realm, meaning that the gods do not change their plans as a result of any subsequently performed theurgic ritual.[129] Iamblichus draws an analogy between the universal workings of the cosmos and the dispensations of individual

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127 Iamblichus, *DM* 8.7 (269.10–270.5).

128 Iamblichus, *Letter 8: To Macedonius, On Fate* F4, lines 5–8.

129 Iamblichus, *DM* 8.8 (271.13–272.11).

souls: in terms of the cosmos, the realm of generation and the physical cosmos are dependent upon intellectual reality; in the same way, liberation from the processes of generation is in harmony with the descent of souls and their introduction into generation.[130] In other words, the procession and reversion, the descent and ascent of the soul are in harmony with one another since there is no ontological gap or break between intelligible reality and the physical cosmos, a metaphysical conception described as 'an unbroken line of continuity'.[131] Thus Iamblichus' claim that theurgy can allow liberation from the bonds of fate does not imply a physical or chronological liberation from the processes of generation, which would imply a break in the chain of being. Olympiodorus attributes precisely this view to Iamblichus:

> Ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἀεί τινα μένειν, οὔτε ἐν τῷ νοητῷ, ὡς Ἰάμβλιχος· εἴπερ γὰρ κατῆλθεν, πέφυκεν κατιέναι ποτέ.
>
> It is not possible to remain always in the noetic realm either, as Iamblichus maintains; for if one has descended in the past, it is natural that one should descend again at some time.[132]

In his commentary on this fragment John Dillon states, 'Even the soul of the adept must descend again, it seems, presumably as a *boddhisatva*, to lead his less fortunate fellow men to the truth. Iamblichus seems to hold that such an enlightened soul never loses its contact with [the intelligible realm] during its period of descent, but descend it must.'[133] Thus, liberation from fate must entail a transformation of consciousness for the theurgist, where fate is viewed within its full cosmological context, as a reflection of divine providence. Iamblichus' views of fate and divine providence contribute towards the comparative value which he places on inductive and inspired modes of divination: inductive divination can only predict everyday events, those determined by necessity and fate, and, moreover, it cannot bring a divine perspective to such events. Iamblichus maintains that knowing events in the realm of fate or necessity without aligning them to their divine causes and purpose does not ultimately bring happiness; only the theurgic path to the gods brings complete happiness to humans.[134] Iamblichus' valuation of inspired divination as superior relates not only to its closer proximity to the divine, but also to the theurgist's alignment with divine

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130 Iamblichus, *DM* 8.8 (272.7–11). Cf. also 8.6 (269.4–9); 8.7 (269.10–270.14).

131 Iamblichus, *DM* 5.26 (240.9–14); Olympiodorus, *In Alcibiadem* 110.12ff. = Iamblichus, *In Alcibiadem* F8; Shaw (1995), 133–134.

132 Olympiodorus, *In Phaedonem*, p. 191, 26ff. = Iamblichus, *In Phaedonem* F5a.

133 Dillon (1973; repr. 2009), 243.

134 Iamblichus, *DM* 10.1 (286.2–10); 10.3 (287.13–289.2); 10.4 (289.3–11); 10.5 (290.12–292.3).

providence, which enables him or her to attain a right relationship with fate through divine vision or perspective.

Ethics and Theurgic Divination

Iamblichus' assertion that the two prerequisites for noetic ascent are the infallible truth of oracles and the soul which has attained perfect virtue suggests a signficant link between ethics and theurgic divination. In order to explore this connection, it is necessary to examine the convergence of epistemology, ethics and ontology in Iamblichus' philosophy.

Through divination, the theurgist embodies and expresses divine illumination, will and love, for the gods manifest through the soul of the theurgist. The task of the theurgist is to receive divine illumination and to manifest the work of the gods in the material cosmos, having aligned himself or herself to divine will through direct realisation of the Good. The final section of *De Mysteriis* 10 considers the 'way to happiness' which Iamblichus claims is the theurgic path – this includes the most complete use of divination:

> Μόνη τοίνυν ἡ θεία μαντικὴ συναπτομένη τοῖς θεοῖς ὡς ἀληθῶς ἡμῖν τῆς θείας ζωῆς μεταδίδωσι, τῆς τε προγνώσεως καὶ τῶν θείων νοήσεων μετέχουσα καὶ ἡμᾶς θείους ὡς ἀληθῶς ἀπεργάζεται· ἡ δὲ αὐτὴ καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἡμῖν γνησίως παρέχει, διότι πεπλήρωται τῶν ἀγαθῶν ὅλων ἡ μακαριωτάτη τῶν θεῶν νόησις·
>
> Only divine divination, therefore, conjoined with the gods, truly imparts to us a share in divine life, partaking as it does in the foreknowledge and intellections of the gods, and renders us, in truth, divine. And this genuinely furnishes the good for us, because the most blessed intellection of the gods is filled with all goods.[135]

The possibility of such an alignment between the theurgist and divine will is intimately linked with Iamblichus' notion that an innate knowledge of the gods is coexistent with our own nature. Iamblichus often refers to the presence of the divine in the human soul as the 'One of the soul', which marks the human's pre-ontological connection with the divine, but it is vital to note that this element is considered to be suspended from the gods as a gift from them.[136] Iamblichus

[135] Iamblichus, *DM* 10.4 (289.3–7), trs. Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell (2003), with emendations.

[136] *DM* 1.3 (8.2–9); 3.18 (144.10–13); 1.15 (46.9–12). Feichtinger (2003), 152, contrasts the concept of grace in Augustine (unique in Christ) and Iamblichus (present in all human souls, providing the theological basis for the redemption of the human soul).

states elsewhere that it is through this that the soul can attain ascent to the gods and liberation from fate:

> τούτων δὴ οὕτως ἐχόντων ἡ μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν κόσμων εἰς ἡμᾶς καθήκουσα ψυχὴ ταῖς περιόδοις συνακολουθεῖ τῶν κόσμων, ἡ δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ νοητοῦ νοητῶς παροῦσα τῆς γενεσιουργοῦ κυκλήσεως ὑπερέχει, καὶ κατ᾽ αὐτὴν ἥ τε λύσις γίγνεται τῆς εἱμαρμένης καὶ ἡ πρὸς τοὺς νοητοὺς θεοὺς ἄνοδος, θεουργία τε ὅση πρὸς τὸ ἀγέννητον ἀνάγεται κατὰ τὴν τοιαύτην ζωὴν ἀποτελεῖται.
>
> This being the case, the soul which descends to us from the (celestial) realms accommodates itself to the circuits of these realms, but that which is present to us in an intelligible mode from the intelligible transcends the cycle of generation, and it is in virtue of it that we may attain to emancipation from fate and ascent to the intelligible gods. That part of theurgy that is involved with ascent to the ungenerated achieves its end through such a level of life as this.[137]

Within Iamblichus' cosmological framework, the innate presence of the divine within the human soul is the anthropological equivalent of the innate presence of divine providence and will throughout the whole cosmos. Through a full realisation of this innate divine principle, Iamblichus claims that a spontaneous and concurrent realisation of divine providence will allow the theurgist to be liberated from the bonds of fate.[138] In other words, 'what is in our power', according to Iamblichus, is the possibility of alignment with the divine which brings liberation from the bonds of fate.

Iamblichus' views of divine providence, love and will are based on the Platonic notion that those who know the good will *always* act according to it.[139] This idea acts as a central foundation of Platonism and underlies Neoplatonist metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. In fact, this view represents a convergence of epistemological, ethical and ontological status which has profound consequences for the nature of theurgic divination. For Iamblichus, divine illumination and providence actively manifest and express the One and the Good to lower ontological levels of being. Iamblichus states that divine illumination is as far superior to human voluntary motion as the divine will of the Good is to the (human) life of ordinary deliberation and choice (προαιρετικῆς ζωῆς).[140]

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[137] Iamblichus, *DM* 8.6 (269.4–9).

[138] Iamblichus, *DM* 8.7 (270.6–14).

[139] This notion, commonly referred to as 'Socratic intellectualism', is evident in the following dialogues: Plato, *Meno* 78a–b, 88a–b, ed. W.R.M. Lamb (1967); *Protagoras* 358c–d, ed. W.R.M. Lamb (1967).

[140] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.12 (41.1–3); Feichtinger (2003), 134. Cf. Shaw (1995), 69, on Iamblichus' attitude towards *prohairesis*.

According to this viewpoint, human beings live a life subject to rational choices between alternatives: however, the appearance of alternatives arises as a result of human ignorance of, and thus alienation from, the true nature of the good.[141] The gods have true will, however, since they know the good completely; therefore, they do not have to make choices between alternatives as mortals do.[142] From this perspective, the task of the theurgist is to reveal the will of the gods, made possible through their assimilation to the divine, since the gods are the givers of all Good:

> Σκοπεῖν δὴ δεῖ τίς αὐτοῦ γίγνεται λύσις καὶ ἀπαλλαγὴ τῶν δεσμῶν. Ἔστι τοίνυν οὐκ ἄλλη τις ἢ τῶν θεῶν γνῶσις· ἰδέα γάρ ἐστιν εὐδαιμονίας τὸ ἐπίστασθαι τὸ ἀγαθόν, ὥσπερ τῶν κακῶν ἰδέα συμβαίνει ἡ λήθη τῶν ἀγαθῶν καὶ ἀπάτη περὶ τὸ κακόν...ἡ δ' ἱερατικὴ καὶ θεουργικὴ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας δόσις καλεῖται μὲν θύρα πρὸς θεὸν τὸν δημιουργὸν τῶν ὅλων, ἢ τόπος ἢ αὐλὴ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ...κατάρτυσιν τῆς διανοίας εἰς μετουσίαν καὶ θέαν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ τῶν ἐναντίων πάντων ἀπαλλαγήν, μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα πρὸς τοὺς τῶν ἀγαθῶν δοτῆρας θεοὺς ἕνωσιν.
>
> Hence we must consider how one might be liberated and set free from these bonds. There is, indeed, no way other than the knowledge of the gods. For understanding the Good is the paradigm of well-being, just as obliviousness to the Good and deception concerning evil constitute the paradigm of evil things ... But the sacred and theurgic gift of well-being is called the gateway to the creator of all things, or the place or courtyard of the good ... it prepares the mind for the participation in and vision of the Good, and for a release from everything which opposes it; and, at the last, for a union with the gods who are the givers of all things good.[143]

Iamblichus' claim that theurgy has the potential to liberate mortals from the bonds of fate arises as a direct consequence of his idea that the theurgist can align him or herself with divine will through realisation of the Good:

> εἰ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς θεοῖς ἡ οὐσία τῶν ἀγαθῶν ὅλων καὶ τελειότης περιέχεται καὶ ἡ πρώτη δύναμις αὐτῶν καὶ ἀρχή, παρὰ μόνοις ἡμῖν καὶ τοῖς ὁμοίως ἐχομένοις τῶν κρειττόνων γνησίως τε τῆς πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἑνώσεως ἀντιλαμβανομένοις ἡ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ὅλων ἀρχὴ καὶ τελευτὴ σπουδαίως ἐπιτηδεύεται· ἐνταῦθα δὴ οὖν καὶ

[141] Iamblichus, *In Tim*. 4, F87, 11–14. Cf. Shaw (1995), 68–69; Clarke (2001), 48–49; Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell (2003), 51, n. 76; Feichtinger (2003), 133–134.

[142] Iamblichus, *DM* 1.7 (21.1–22.5); 1.5 (16.12–17.5); 2.2 (69.6–9); 2.11 (97.12–13); 3.17 (139.13–140.4); 3.23 (155.14–156.2).

[143] Iamblichus, *DM* 10.5 (290.12–291.1; 291.10–12; 292.1–3). Cf. also 1.7 (21.2–9); Shaw (1995), 68–69; 187.

> ἡ τῆς ἀληθείας πάρεστι θέα καὶ ἡ τῆς νοερᾶς ἐπιστήμης, καὶ μετὰ τῆς τῶν θεῶν γνώσεως ἡ πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς ἐπιστροφὴ καὶ ἡ γνῶσις ἑαυτῶν συνέπεται.
>
> For if the essence and accomplishment of all good is encompassed by the gods and their primal power and authority, it is only with us and those who are similarly possessed by the greatest kinds and have genuinely gained union with them that the beginning and the end of all good is seriously practised. It is there, then, that there occurs the vision of truth and intellectual understanding, and with knowledge of the gods follows a turning towards ourselves and knowledge of ourselves.[144]

The convergence of epistemological, ethical and ontological status which underlies Iamblichus' cosmology and metaphysics has profound and far-reaching consequences for our understanding of the *modus operandi* and purposes of theurgic divination, which from this perspective is not a neutral method of fortune-telling or prediction of the future, a typical characterisation of divination in the modern world.[145] Rather, theurgic divination is conceived as an all-encompassing epistemological and ethical tool which transforms the soul and consciousness; it has the potential of allowing the human being to 'manifest' the gods. As an epistemological practice, a *supra-rational* way of knowing, Iamblichus conceptualises theurgic divination as necessarily entailing an ethical discipline which has the potential to transform the soul in an ontological and ethical sense.[146] In Iamblichus' view, the theurgist's ethical character is paramount: the theurgist must seek to enlarge his receptivity through ethical means (as well as through ritual and intellectual means), primarily through the scale of virtues, which was established by Plotinus and Porphyry and possibly elaborated by Iamblichus to include further levels of virtue: this scale is cumulative and represents 'a method of progressive divinization'.[147] The ethical and ontological dimensions of theurgic divination explain Iamblichus' comment that the gods sometimes conceal the foreknowledge inherent in divination:

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144 Iamblichus, *DM* 10.1 (286.3–10).

145 Shaw (1995), 232–234.

146 Cf. Shaw (1995), 235: 'Iamblichus' criterion for determining whether the ecstasy was divine or deranged was whether or not it had a beneficial and stabilizing effect on the soul.'

147 Cf. O'Meara (2003), 40–49; Finamore (2012), 113–132, provides an excellent analysis of the scales of virtue in Iamblichus, who seems to have added three virtues to the four advanced by Plotinus and Porphyry (Political; Purificatory; Contemplative; Paradigmatic): at the lower end of the scale, the Natural (φυσικαί) and the Ethical (ἠθικαί) and, at the top of the scale, the 'Hieratic' (ἱερατικαί) or 'Theurgic' (θεουργικαί).

> οἱ γὰρ θεοὶ καὶ δύναμιν τοῦ φυλάξασθαι τὰ ἐπιόντα ἀπὸ τῆς φύσεως δεινὰ παραδιδόασι· καὶ ὅταν μὲν ἀσκεῖν δέῃ τὴν ἀρετὴν καὶ συμβάλληται πρὸς τοῦτο ἡ τοῦ μέλλοντος ἀδηλία, ἀποκρύπτουσι τὰ ἐσόμενα ἕνεκα τοῦ τὴν ψυχὴν βελτίονα ἀπεργάζεσθαι· ὅταν δὲ πρὸς τοῦτο μηδὲν διαφέρῃ, λυσιτελῇ δὲ ταῖς ψυχαῖς τὸ προγιγνώσκειν, ἕνεκα τοῦ σώζειν αὐτὰς καὶ ἀνάγειν, τὴν ἐν ταῖς μαντείαις πρόγνωσιν ἐν μέσαις αὐτῶν ταῖς οὐσίαις ἐντιθέασιν.
>
> For the gods grant the power of defence against the dangers which menace us from the natural order. And when it is necessary to exercise virtue and an uncertainty of future events contributes to this, then (the gods) conceal what will be for the improvement of the soul. But whenever this (uncertainty) does not matter for this purpose, and foreknowledge rather is advantageous to souls for saving and leading them upwards, then the gods implant in the midst of their essences the foreknowledge inherent in divination.[148]

Divination is conceptualised as an ethical and soteriological tool for expressing and manifesting the goodness of the gods; it should always be used in service of discovering and attaining the good and for the purposes of the ascent of consciousness to the gods.[149] As a tool of self-knowledge and a way of accessing divine wisdom, it has characteristics which could be considered to be reminiscent of Eastern practices of meditation. Theurgic divination brings a divine perspective to human problems and embodied life, which enables the theurgist to see the divine causes of human matters.

Supra-rationality, Divination and Theurgy

It is quite clear that Iamblichus conceptualises many types of inspired divination as operating on a continuum which enables the enquirer to progressively access self-knowledge and knowledge of the cosmos and of the gods. This continuum assists the ascent of the soul at every stage of its journey. At the lower end of this continuum, Iamblichus discusses the Oracles of Apollo at Delphi and Didyma as leading the enquirer to dialectical enquiry in order to decode the true meaning of the oracular response:

> αὐτὸς ὁ ἐν Δελφοῖς θεὸς οὔτε λέγων καθ' Ἡράκλειτον, οὔτε κρύπτων ἀλλὰ σημαίνων τὰς μαντείας, ἐγείρει πρὸς διαλεκτικὴν διερεύνησιν τοὺς ἐπηκόους τῶν χρησμῶν, ἀφ' ἧς ἀμφιβολία τε καὶ

[148] Iamblichus, *DM* 10.4 (289.12–290.3).

[149] Iamblichus, *DM* 10.4 (289.5–7; 289.10–12; 290.1–3); Shaw (1995), 234.

> ὁμωνυμία ἐκρίθησαν καὶ διττὸν πᾶν ἀνερευνηθὲν φῶς ἐπιστήμης ἀνῆψεν...ἀδελφὰ δὲ τούτων καὶ ὁ ἐν Βραγχίδαις θεὸς ἐκφαίνει τῆς διαλεκτικῆς ἔργα, περιφανῆ τὴν ἐπαγωγὴν παραδηλῶν, ὅταν λέγῃ· "οὔτ' ἂν ὠκυπέτης ἰὸς οὔτε λύρη οὔτε νηῦς οὔτε ἄλλο οὐδὲν ἄνευ ἐπιστημονικῆς χρήσιος γένοιτ' ἄν κοτε ὠφέλιμον.'
>
> ...the God in Delphi himself, in Heraclitus's words, 'not speaking out, nor yet concealing, but signifying' his prophecies, rouses up those who hearken to his utterances to dialectical enquiry, on the basis of which they discerned ambiguity and homonymy, and the ferreting out of every double meaning kindled in them the light of knowledge ... And akin to these also are the feats of dialectic of the God in Branchidae, revealing clearly the procedure of induction, when he says, 'No swift-flying arrow, nor lyre, nor ship, nor anything else would ever attain a useful end without use based on knowledge'.[150]

Through their ambiguity, oracles urge people to attain knowledge through a dialectical process; this knowledge is envisaged as practical, informing the subsequent actions of the enquirer and bringing beneficial results. Although Iamblichus clearly conceives of theurgic divination as operating at higher levels, with the theurgist moving progressively to the top of this continuum, and consequently operating on a supra-rational level rather than through a dialectical process, a similar methodology and set of potential consequences underlies his conception of theurgic divination. According to Iamblichus, theurgic divination brings about a profound change of consciousness in the theurgist, which produces the most beneficial results (primarily the purification, liberation and salvation of the soul but also useful foreknowledge, appropriate order and Beauty itself) while other types of inspired divination achieve practical, beneficial results.[151] Iamblichus clearly endorses theurgic divination as the culmination and most complete use of divination, allowing access to divine wisdom which is conceived as subsequently affecting every action of the theurgist.

As discussed in Chapter 5, theurgic divination (divine μαντική) allows the theurgist to conjoin himself to the gods and to see all things within the cosmos from a divine perspective by participating in 'the most blessed intellection of the gods'(ἡ μακαριωτάτη τῶν θεῶν νόησις).[152] It is conceived of as supra-rational because it enables the theurgist to participate in the intellection of the

[150] Iamblichus, *Letter 5: To Dexippus*, *On Dialectic*, lines 7–10, 12–15, in Dillon and Polleichtner (2009).

[151] The beneficial results of theurgic divination: Iamblichus, *DM* 10.1 (286.3–10); 10.4 (289.3–12); 10.5 (291.10–292.3); 10.7 (293.4–8). Cf. also *DM* 2.9 (87.11–14; 88.13–14) on the benefits to humans of epiphanies of the gods; 3.3 (108.6–109.1) on the beneficial results of dream divination in Asclepius' sanctuaries.

[152] Iamblichus, *DM* 10.4 (289.7; 289.3–5).

gods: this is possible because, according to Iamblichus, truth co-exists in its essence with the gods, because it is based in the intelligible realm.[153] As a supra-rational phenomenon, theurgic divination is envisaged as encompassing the summit and culmination of intellection while simultaneously transcending it. Thus, rationality and revelation are not envisaged by Iamblichus as mutually exclusive categories, but as inclusive and linked: rationality is seen in itself as a gift from the gods which, if used in the right conditions with the appropriate receptivity, can help to induce or trigger divinatory revelations from the gods, although divination is ultimately caused by the gods themselves.[154] Thus, Iamblichus claims that it is only with the theurgists and 'those who are similarly possessed by the greatest kinds and have genuinely gained union with them' (...τοῖς ὁμοίως ἐχομένοις τῶν κρειττόνων γνησίως τε τῆς πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἑνώσεως ἀντιλαμβανομένοις...) that the beginning and end of all good is seriously practised and that this is where visions of truth (ἡ τῆς ἀληθείας θέα) and intellectual understanding (ἡ τῆς νοερᾶς ἐπιστήμης) occur: with knowledge of the gods follows a turning towards and knowledge of ourselves.[155] We have already seen that Iamblichus' account of dream divination (*oneiromancy*) reveals different types of divinatory dreams which chart a progressive continuum of contact with the gods, whereby the ritual practitioner's engagement with intellect assists in producing more perfect forms of divination. Firstly, the intellect contemplates real beings (ὁ νοῦς τὰ ὄντα θεωρεῖ); in the subsequent type, the soul unites its apportioned lots of life and intellectual activity to the universals (τοῖς ὅλοις...συνάπτῃ τὰς μοίρας τῆς ζωῆς καὶ τῆς νοερᾶς ἐνεργείας); in the next stage, the soul weaves together its intellectual and its divine part with higher powers (...τὸ νοερὸν ἑαυτῆς ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ θεῖον συνυφαίνῃ τοῖς κρείττοσι...), while in the final stage, the soul refers accounts of things happening to their causes, the gods (...τοὺς λόγους τῶν γιγνομένων ἀνάγῃ πρὸς τοὺς αἰτίους αὐτῶν θεούς...).[156] Thus, in Iamblichus' schema, divination is supra-rational rather than irrational.

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[153] Iamblichus, *DM* 10.2 (287.3–4). Cf. also *DM* 3.27 (165.7–8): 'But if, then, divination is truly such a divine work, who would not be ashamed to attribute to it a nature without intellect ...?' (Εἰ δὴ τοιοῦτόν ἐστι τὸ ὄντως μαντικὸν θεῖον ἔργον, τίς οὐκ ἂν αἰσχυνθείη τὴν ἄνευ διανοίας...).

[154] Iamblichus stringently denies (*DM* 3.20 (149.4–150.2)) that it is because of the soul's own excellence and wisdom that it can share in divine works: this is because he is speaking in a causal sense of the primary causation of the gods in theurgic operations. This implies an *instrumental agency* on the part of the soul in theurgy, as discussed in Chapter 6. In relation to this, Iamblichus claims (*DM* 3.25 [159.10–11]): 'divine possession is a perfection and deliverance of the soul' (ἡ θεοφορία τελειότης καὶ σωτηρία τῆς ψυχῆς.).

[155] Iamblichus, *DM* 10.1 (286.3–10).

[156] Iamblichus, *DM* 3.3 (106.11–108.3). Cf. Chapter 6, pp. 231–236.

Divination by Numbers

We have seen that Iamblichus sets out several kinds of inspired divination which are suitable for the theurgist: oracles, dream divination (*oneiromancy*) and divination by statues. As well as becoming a prophet (μάντις) and uttering their own oracles, the theurgist also supports and endorses oracular sanctuaries and other forms of traditional religious cult. However, there are hints in Iamblichean works that the theurgist also used another form of divination: divination by numbers.[157] Although the nature of this form of divination remains obscure, there are allusions to it which suggest its theurgic significance. In *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*, a work commonly accepted to reflect Iamblichus' own theurgic programme and teaching methods, Iamblichus tells us that Pythagoras taught Abaris, the prophet of Apollo discussed above, a new form of divination to replace haruspicy: '... foreknowledge through numbers, believing this to be purer, more divine, and more suitable to the heavenly number of the gods' (...τὴν διὰ τῶν ἀριθμῶν πρόγνωσιν παρέδωκεν, ἡγούμενος ταύτην καθαρωτέραν εἶναι καὶ θειοτέραν καὶ τοῖς οὐρανίοις τῶν θεῶν ἀριθμοῖς οἰκειοτέραν...); Iamblichus claims that Pythagoras created this system of divination and worship of the gods from numbers.[158] Pythagoras only taught this kind of divination to Abaris because he had already cultivated his receptivity to a high level and was a prophet of Apollo, suggesting that divination by numbers was a theurgic activity.[159] Furthermore, Pythagoras taught this type of divination to Abaris because '... not wishing to deprive him of his zeal for truth, but to provide him with a more trusty means to it, free of blood and butchery ... produced for him that which is called "all-true", organized by means of arithmetical science' (... βουλόμενος ὁ Πυθαγόρας μὴ ἀφαιρεῖν μὲν αὐτοῦ τὴν εἰς τἀληθὲς σπουδήν, παρασχεῖν δὲ διά τινος ἀσφαλεστέρου καὶ χωρὶς αἵματος καὶ σφαγῆς...τὸ λεγόμενον παναληθὲς ἀπετέλεσεν αὐτῷ, δι' ἀριθμητικῆς ἐπιστήμης συντεταγμένον.).[160] Iamblichus claims that Pythagoras considered divination by numbers (clearly a form of inspired divination) to be purer, more divine and a more reliable way of attaining to truth than haruspicy (classified as inductive divination); this accords with Iamblichus' differentiation between inspired and inductive modes of divination. Furthermore, Iamblichus earlier claimed that the Pythagoreans took a serious interest in divination, because they saw this alone as the means of discerning the purpose of the gods.[161] This shows that divination by numbers was not primarily a means of foretelling the future, but

157 Cf. Shaw (1995), 197–198.

158 Iamblichus, *VP* 19.93; 28.147. Abaris: see above p. 261.

159 Cf. above p. 261; Iamblichus, *VP* 19.90–91. Cf. also *VP* 28.135; 32.215–217.

160 Iamblichus, *VP* 28.147.

161 Iamblichus, *VP* 28.138.

a way of discerning the purpose of the gods and aligning oneself with it; this accords very closely with Iamblichus' account of the characteristics of theurgic divination. Although the method and operation of divination by numbers remains obscure, it may well be connected with the use of noetic symbols (σύμβολα) in theurgy: these noetic symbols may well have been mathematical images.[162] Intriguingly, Iamblichus' account of Abaris, a prophet of Apollo, participating in what he would consider to be a high-level form of theurgic divination, raises the issue of the precise relationship between theurgy and religious tradition.

Some Reflections on the Relationship between Theurgy and Religious Tradition

Some scholars tend to bifurcate public and private forms of ritual in Antiquity: this bifurcation is particularly applied to divination rituals and consequently, a division between private ritual (theurgy) and public ritual (traditional religious practices) is often perceived in Iamblichus' theurgic programme.[163] Yet because theurgy is conceived as a way of life, as well as involving specific ritual practices, traditional religious practices are perfectly compatible with theurgy; in fact, Iamblichus and, later, Proclus bring all traditional cultic worship (Greek, Egyptian and Chaldean), when appropriately conducted, under the aegis of theurgy.[164] Like Porphyry, they saw polytheistic religious worship from all cultures as compatible and complementary ways to the gods and to truth. This is further supported by their use of the term ἱερατική (roughly translated as 'the priestly art') to describe theurgy, which connotes any traditional cultic system which aims at direct communication with the divine, such as Egyptian religious tradition.[165] Yet, influenced by arguments of a shift in the locus of the divine from holy places to inspired individuals in Late Antiquity, some view this incorporation of traditional religious practices as little more than a superficial maneouvre designed to legitimise theurgy.[166]

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[162] Cf. Shaw (1995), 189–215.

[163] Cf. especially Athanassiadi (1993), 115–117; 123–124; 127; Shaw (2012), 97. Others have challenged the bifurcation of private and public rituals in Late Antique religion, especially Frankfurter (2005), 233–251.

[164] As noted by Smith (1974), 122; Fowden (1986), 132; Van Liefferinge (1999), 91, 208–209; O'Meara (2003), 126; Digeser (2009), 85 *contra* Athanassiadi (1993), 115–117; 123–124; Shaw (2012), 97.

[165] Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 1.11 (37.4–6); 1.15 (46.5–6; 48.4); 1.21 (65.2); 3.31 (176.3–6; 178.13.); 4.1 (181.8); 4.2 (184.10); 4.3 (185.1); 4.18 (225.3); 5.20 (228.6); 5.21 (230.2); 5.22 (230.12); 7.5 (258.8); 8.4 (267.7); 8.5 (268.7); 8.8 (271.12); 9.6 (281.1); 10.5 (291.3; 291.10); 10.6 (292.13–14); Proclus, *In Remp*. I.37.11ff. (Kroll); Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 464–465; Chlup (2012), 168.

[166] Cf. especially Athanassiadi (1993), 115–130.

On the contrary, Iamblichus exhibits tremendous respect for oracular sanctuaries and other forms of traditional religious practice.[167] The idea that the theurgist ultimately has to become a prophet (μάντις) and utter their own oracles neither negates nor compromises his esteem and endorsement of traditional religious practices, including those of oracular sanctuaries. This respect for traditional religion is not superficial but integral to the central nature and purposes of theurgy. Firstly, it is related to the perceved origins of theurgy: Iamblichus (and later Proclus) envisaged theurgy as directly derived from Egyptian and Chaldean religious traditions; for them, theurgy represented a restoration of the old ways, a way of following the ancestors both philosophical (such as Pythagoras) and religious (such as Egyptian priests).[168] Whatever we make of this claim, it is vital to recognise that for Neoplatonic theurgists, this entailed the inherent inclusion of traditional religious practices within the ambit of theurgy. Secondly, the centrality of unbroken continuity and community within the cosmology of theurgy necessarily entails a model of piety and respect for traditional religious practices.[169] As well as envisaging an unbroken continuum of worship, Iamblichus conceptualises the cosmos as an inextricably connected community of gods and humans bound together by divine love.[170] The anthropological equivalent and human manifestation of this divine love, ideally attained by the theurgist, is an all-encompassing friendship (φιλία) and care for humanity (φίλανθρωπία): this includes the provision of effective cultic worship for all humanity.[171] Thus, the 'unbroken line of continuity' which forms the foundation of theurgy underlies, exemplifies and provides the rationale for the theurgist's attitude towards religious

[167] *Contra* Athanassiadi (1993), 115–117; 123–124; 127; Shaw (2012), 97.

[168] Cf. Marinus, *Proc*. 18–19; 29–30; 32–33; 36. It is vital to note that while Iamblichus thinks that theurgy derives from Egyptian and Chaldean religious traditions, he claims that theurgy ultimately derives from the gods themselves: cf. *DM* 1.21 (65.3–5). In relation to this, Iamblichus asserts that the Egyptians were the first to be granted participation in the gods: *DM* 7.5 (258.3–5). Fowden (1986), 134–141, connects Iamblichus' theurgic programme with the theurgy of Hermetic circles and books in Egypt, noting that: 'In pointing to the Egyptian origins of Hermeticism, Iamblichus does not seem to have been making any very striking innovation. Since Porphyry had addressed his attack on theurgy to another (fictitious?) Egyptian priest, Anebo, the Egyptian connection was clearly common knowledge – *in fact, it looks as if Egyptian priests were regarded as the authorities par excellence on theurgy*' [my emphasis] (135).

[169] Cf. Chapter 4, pp. 142–143; Chapter 6, p. 236. Divine love: Iamblichus, *DM* 1.12 (42.5–11); 1.14 (44.11–45.3). Cf. Addey (2011b), 322; (2012), 148–167.

[170] Cf. Chapter 4, p. 143; Iamblichus, *DM* 1.8 (28.4–6); 1.9 (31.9–32.6); 3.20 (149.9–150.2); 5.10 (211.12–14); 5.14 (217.4–5; 217.14–218.4); 5.20 (227.1–10); 5.21 (228.11–229.6; 229.10–230.11); 5.24 (235.7–11); 5.26 (240.9–14); O'Meara (2003), 128.

[171] Cf. Chapter 4, pp. 142–143; Iamblichus, *DM* 1.19 (59.11–60.6); 5.1 (199.5–10); 5.18 (223.8–225.9); 5.26 (240.9–14); Marinus, *Proc*. 15; 16.20–22; 17; Addey (2011b), 322; (2012), 148–167; O'Meara (2003), 123–128.

practices, as well as his or her political involvement. Indeed, Iamblichus and Proclus envisage the theurgist as the defender, protector and spokesperson for traditional religious practices and civic cult.[172]

Indeed, this integration and attitude is obvious in the lives of Iamblichus and his successors. Eunapius describes the collective performance of sacrificial ritual by Iamblichus and his philosophical community followed by conversation about the gods in keeping with the ritual.[173] Iamblichus was considered by his followers to have had special access to the gods and to have been divinely inspired in his philosophical teaching and way of life. Olympiodorus' statement about Iamblichus typifies this attitude: 'For he makes these statements as inspired utterances, so to speak, from his watchtower, as is his wont' (ταῦτα γὰρ ἐνθουσιῶν ὡς κατὰ περιωπήν φησιν, οἷος ἐκείνου θυμός).[174] Eunapius' portrayal of Iamblichus' followers contributes further evidence for the integration of theurgy with traditional religious practices: Aedesius once 'resorted with prayer to a form of oracle in which he placed most trust (it came in a dream), the god appeared in answer to his prayer and made in hexameter verse the response' (καταφυγὼν δὲ ἐπί τινα μαντείαν δι' εὐχῆς ἥπερ ἐπίστευε μάλιστα (αὕτη δὲ ἦν δι' ὀνείρατος), ὁ μὲν θεὸς ἐφίστατο πρὸς τὴν εὐχήν, καὶ ἔχρησεν ἐν ἑξαμέτρῳ τόνῳ τάδε·); when Aedesius awoke, he noticed that the back of his hand was covered in writing and followed this oracle scrupulously.[175] In Chapter 1, we met Sosipatra, whose words 'had the same force as an immutable oracle' (...τὰ λεχθέντα οὐδὲν διέφερε τῶν ἀκινήτων μαντειῶν...).[176] Sosipatra, who held a chair in and taught philosophy, neatly exemplifies Iamblichus' notion that the theurgist must become a prophet(ess) (μάντις). Eustathius' and Sosipatra's son, Antoninus, went to Alexandria and eventually settled in Canopus, where he 'wholly dedicated and applied himself to the worship of the gods and to their secret rites' (...τοῖς ἐκείνῃ θεοῖς τε καὶ ἀρρήτοις ἱεροῖς ἀναθεὶς καὶ προσαρμόσας ἑαυτόν) and even prophesied the destruction of the Temple of Sarapis, according to Eunapius, who links his presence to the continued survival and prosperity of the temple.[177] Marinus describes Proclus' piety as involving Chaldean and Orphic purifications and initiations, smoothly combined with stringent observance of ancestral rites and festivals of different peoples and polytheistic cultures.[178] When Marinus describes a theurgic cure of a friend's daughter as effected by Proclus, he maintains that the

[172] Marinus, *Proc.* 18–19.

[173] Eunapius, *VS* 458–59.

[174] Olympiodorus, *In Phaedonem*, p. 57, 1ff. = Iamblichus, *In Phaedonum* F1. Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 16–17, for Eunapius' account of the religious practices of Iamblichus and his philosophical circle.

[175] Eunapius, *VS* 464–465.

[176] Eunapius, *VS* 469.

[177] Eunapius, *VS* 471–472.

[178] Eunapius, *VS* 458–459; Marinus, *Proc.*18–19. Cf. Chlup (2012), 173.

philosopher went to the temple of Asclepius and prayed 'in the ancient manner'.[179] These examples demonstrate the integration of theurgy and traditional religious practices.

Traditionally, Neoplatonist claims of inextricable links between theurgy and religious practices have been viewed as a self-constructed claim with little or no historical basis; yet even here caution should be exercised. Chapter 2 examined important parallels between Neoplatonic religious attitudes and contemporary religious practices: Porphyry's claims for important connections between the reception of oracles and mystery cult initiation are paralleled in contemporary oracular practices, particularly in the mystery cult initiation undertaken at the Oracle of Claros prior to oracular consultation. Neoplatonic views of Homeric text as inspired utterance and the corollary that Homer is a divine seer or sage with special knowledge are paralleled in contemporary attitudes towards literature and religion, particularly exemplified by the *Homeromanteia* (Oracles of Homer). Recent scholarship has pointed to the importance of viewing philosophers within their political, social and cultural contexts, rather than envisaging them as separate from local religious contexts.[180] Indeed, Iamblichus himself was descended from a family of Syrian priests. Proclus was initiated into theurgy by Asclepigeneia, the daughter of Plutarch and the granddaughter (or great-granddaughter) of Nestorius, both of whom had handed on the theurgic tradition to her: Nestorius was an active theurgist (at least according to Marinus) and also the hierophant of Eleusis (from c. A.D. 355–380); fascinatingly, the hierophant apparently had a reputation for giving reliable prophecies and acted as a seer.[181] The emperor Julian based his restoration of traditional Graeco-Roman religion during his brief reign (A.D. 361–363) on the works of Iamblichus. Thus, Neoplatonist philosophers were not divorced from their religious, cultural, social and political contexts and often played an active role in supporting and maintaining traditional cultic practices.

Conclusion

Iamblichus classifies all types of divination according to the traditional Greek typology which distinguishes between two modes of divination: inspired and inductive. In *De Mysteriis* 3, he categorises these modes of divination according to two criteria: firstly, through a valuation of their proximity to the divine and, secondly, by utilising a conceptual framework of a hierarchical schema

[179] Marinus, *Proc.* 29. Cf. also *Proc.* 18–19; 26; 30; 32–33.

[180] Cf. especially O'Meara (2003); Marx-Wolf (2010), 481–482; 488.

[181] Marinus, *Proc.* 28; 12; Eunapius, *VS* 475–476, 493; Zosimus 4.18; Clinton (1974), 43; Burkert (1987), 50; 85; 113–114.

of causation, whereby the causes underlying divination are seen as multiple and operating simultaneously. He distinguishes these modes of divination in accordance with this framework of causation, particularly in relation to their respective primary or ultimate causes. In the case of inspired divination, the ultimate cause is the divine, while the primary cause of inductive divination is human skill. On this basis, Iamblichus maintains the superiority of inspired divination in relation to inductive divination. With regards to inspired divination, Iamblichus delineates the hierarchical schema of causes which operate simultaneously to produce oracles: the divine is the primary cause, while the human soul, intellect and body are lower, auxiliary causes. In doing so, Iamblichus does not deny that human faculties have a role in inspired divination; rather, he claims that they are not the primary cause. However, he implies the significance of these lower, subordinate and auxiliary causes through his emphasis on the importance of the receptivity of the prophet(ess) or theurgist: in his constant reiteration of the fact that these lower causes, the soul and body of the prophet (μάντις), must be in a purified and receptive state in order to fully receive the divine inspiration. Thus these lower causes are crucial for the receptivity of the human μάντις.

Iamblichus' categorisation of inspired divination according to such a schema of causation enables him to endorse the view of inspired divination as a supra-rational phenomenon and as an essential component of theurgic ritual. Since the ultimate cause and principle of inspired divination is the divine, and Iamblichus claims elsewhere that the divine is the same as the intellectual, a view of inspired divination as a supra-rational phenomenon emerges from his account of divination. This type of divination is viewed as being supra-rational, in the sense of transcending rationality rather than lacking it. The role of inspired divination within theurgy is soteriological: it is 'a stage on the way to mystical union'.[182] The goal of inspired divination and theurgy was divinisation: the theurgist attempted to ascend to the noetic realm, in order to achieve union with the divine and to fully awaken to his or her own divinity. Furthermore, inspired divination acts as a sign or manifestation of divine assimilation and divinisation: as the theurgist progressively becomes divinised, so this divinisation (and the theurgist's increasingly closer relationship with divine providence, will and love) is expressed through the utterance of oracles, the words of the gods.

Thus, the theurgist must become their own prophet(ess) (μάντις), but always with a consciousness of their own nothingness that entails and spontaneously elicits a humble and respectful approach towards the gods and all of the greater kinds (angels – heroes – *daimones*), the ancestors (especially philosophical ancestors) and the temples they built in honour of the gods, which of course especially includes oracular sanctuaries. The very essence of theurgy, conceived as operating according to an unbroken continuity which extends throughout the

[182] Athanassiadi (1993), 120.

cosmos, entails an inclusive attitude towards all of humanity; Iamblichus stresses repeatedly the unitive power of theurgy and it is precisely this ethos which underlies the theurgist's manifestation of the Good. Iamblichus and Proclus constantly exhibit such enthusiasm for the significance of cultic worship for all of humanity.

Chapter 8
Manifesting the Gods: Oracles as *Symbola*

Oracles, ritual and philosophy were inextricably linked within late Neoplatonism. Oracles and other forms of 'inspired' divination played a central role in philosophy and theurgy, from Porphyry onwards. Drawing on the allusions to and uses of divination inherent within the Platonic tradition from its inception, such as the portrayal of the *daimonion* of Socrates in Plato's works, late Platonist philosophers of the third and fourth centuries A.D. incorporated oracles into their philosophical praxis and developed sophisticated philosophical, cosmological and theological frameworks to account for their operation. For both Porphyry and Iamblichus, oracles have a primarily soteriological function: they can aid the salvation of the soul at every stage of the soul's journey for those who use them in the appropriate manner. However, both philosophers also envisaged wider, practical benefits for all people deriving from the use of oracles. These philosophers viewed oracles in a manner that encompassed traditional Greek conceptions of oracles and accorded with contemporary Late Antique religious and divinatory practices. They discuss, debate and use traditional Greek oracles from oracular sanctuaries; however, they also utilise and endorse oracles obtained through theurgic rituals. For them, the central element of oracles is the divine, envisaged as the ultimate and primary cause of inspired divination. Therefore, divine inspiration and possession are considered to form the foundation of all forms of inspired divination. Consequently, influenced by Plato and Greek religious tradition, inspired forms of divination are envisaged as having greater value, utility and veracity than inductive divination, which is construed as partially based on human estimation and guesswork and is consequently located at a greater distance from the divine. Oracles, and inspired divination in general, were seen as an essential element of philosophy, as receptacles of divine wisdom and truth. As well as being obtained directly through ritual, Porphyry claims that oracles have to be decoded and received in a ritual manner methodologically analogous to initiation into mystery cults. Oracles thus become a form of philosophical initiation and divine vision. This approach is further developed in Iamblichus' view of oracles and other forms of inspired divination (such as *oneiromancy* or dream divination, divination by statues and divination by numbers) as the supra-rational culmination of philosophy and the centre of theurgic ritual: they connect the human being with the divine realm and, ultimately, act as a stage on the way to, and a sign of, mystical union, leading to the divinisation of the philosopher-theurgist. Oracles and the phenomenon of inspired divination are vital elements of theurgy: the experienced theurgist becomes the

expert prophet(ess) (μάντις) and utters their own oracles, a sign of their contact with and assimilation to the gods and, ultimately, of their divinisation. Indeed, oracles and other forms of inspired divination were central to theurgy, for they were considered to act as guides and sources of wisdom, insight and initiation at every stage of the theurgist's development. This guidance included the provision of ritual instruction, practical advice, metaphysical and cosmological instruction and tools for contemplation and meditation. In fact, divination was considered to be the key medium through which theurgists were envisaged as being able to establish *any* kind of contact with the gods at all through ritual, for Iamblichus and later Platonist philosophers considered that the gods give instruction through oracles to the theurgist for efficacious ritual praxis (that is, ritual which establishes contact with the gods), including the appropriate use of symbols and invocations. This notion formed a central foundation of theurgy and further accounts for the central significance of divination within theurgic praxis.

The centrality of inspired divination within theurgy helps to explain the self-appointed role of the philosopher-theurgist as the protector, guardian and spokesperson of traditional religious practices, which were explicitly drawn under the aegis of theurgy. The philosopher who attained the role of a prophet and uttered their own oracles was considered to be the expert prophet, the mystical sage *par excellence*, and consequently the ideal spokesperson for traditional cultic practices. This role of the philosopher becomes most explicit in the lives and works of Iamblichus and Proclus. Porphyry's position is somewhat ambiguous: although he frequently writes to elucidate, defend and protect traditional religious rites and practices, this activity is not conventionally interpreted within a theurgic context, because of his apparent reservations about the soteriological potential of theurgy. Yet much evidence points towards a more positive valuation of theurgy on Porphyry's part than has previously been recognised and, on this basis, the philosopher's elucidation and defence of religious practices could be seen within a theurgic context. Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* incorporates traditional views of oracles, allowing for the authoritative utterances of a plurality of traditional Greek deities; the work belongs to a consistent tradition of oracles in specific places and from inspired individuals and to the ancient tradition of oracle collections and their importance within Greek (and Roman) religious and cultural tradition: thus, Porphyry's oracle collection is firmly located within ancient tradition. The connections drawn in the *Philosophy from Oracles* between oracular insight and initiation into mystery cults accord with contemporary Late Antique religious praxis, since similar connections are made in many oracular responses from Claros and Didyma and since ritual praxis at the Oracle at Claros linked consulting the oracle with initiation into a mystery cult. Moreover, the connections made between oracles and allegory in the *Philosophy from Oracles* and the oracle on Plotinus correlate with Late Antique attitudes towards literature and religion, particularly usages of the *Homeromanteia* which attest to more widespread

attitudes towards Homer's status as an inspired prophet and the use of Homeric epic as oracular utterance and ritual text in Late Antique culture. Furthermore, in his *De abstinentia* and *Letter to Marcella*, Porphyry emphasises the importance of ethics for ritual practices, an emphasis further developed in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* as the vital foundation for theurgic practice. Iamblichus consistently characterises theurgy as a lifelong endeavour, based on the simultaneous practice of the ethical cultivation of the hierarchy of virtues, intellectual discipline and devotion to ritual practices, including inspired divination. The subtle blend of this simultaneous practice and active cultivation of ethical, intellectual and ritual capacities, combined with humbleness and openness, comprises the receptivity (ἐπιτηδειότης) of the ritual practitioner. Although the theurgist may ultimately become an expert prophet through his or her progressive assimilation to the divine, this role is always codified as entailing a humble and respectful approach towards the gods and all of the greater kinds, as well as towards the ancestors and the temples they built in honour of the gods, which includes oracular sanctuaries. The theurgist's progressive divinisation and increasing affinity with divine providence, love and will is expressed through their own utterance of oracles but also through their concern for all of humanity in religious and political spheres.

In Late Antiquity, pagan–Christian debates often focused on the nature and roles of oracles as a potential source of religious authority and validity. In addition to the continuation of oracular sanctuaries in the third century A.D. (and the widespread usage of oracles and divination well into the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. and possibly beyond), Christian polemic in Late Antiquity attacked oracles and other forms of divination, as well as the pagan philosophers who wrote about them, with such force and vehemence precisely because of the endorsement, support and use of oracles by late Platonist philosophers in their role as protectors of traditional religious cult. Indeed, oracles and divination were a key focus of attack in Late Antique Christian polemical works because they comprised a central element of religious competition and authority in the nexus of traditional Graeco-Roman and Mediterranean cults and religious practices. Using a key case study to examine these pagan–Christian religious debates and polemics, the implicit debate between Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica* and Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*, this study has attempted to identify some focal points and contours of this Late Antique interaction. Whether or not Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* was specifically instigated by and written for Diocletian's Persecution of the Christians and whether or not it comprised part of or was equated with the work *Against the Christians*, the work was perceived as an anti-Christian work (at least by the Christians) and therefore played a key role in Late Antique pagan–Christian debates, becoming a central object of refutation in Christian apologetic works. Oracles were inextricably connected with ritual in Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*, a link exploited by Eusebius who conflates variant divine entities and diverse types of ritual practice in order to give a distorted and biased perspective

on oracles. Using a conventional line of attack, Eusebius seeks to challenge the legitimacy of divination by conflating the pagan gods to whom the oracles are attributed with evil *daimones*. Secondly, he conflates theurgic and religious practices with 'magical' practices (those comprising antagonistic or harmful 'magic' commonly described under the rubric γοητεία), by claiming that the former are no different from the latter because both attempt to 'constrain' and 'compel' the gods. Both conflations are evident in Eusebius' polemical attempt to undermine, discredit and devalue the religious authority and validity of Graeco-Roman religious practices and theurgy and are typical of Late Antique Christian polemic against 'pagan' oracles and religion.

Why exactly did inspired forms of divination play such a crucial role in theurgy? As well as reserving a central place in theurgy for inspired divination, Iamblichus integrates reason and revelation, conceptualising them as mutually inclusive rather than mutually exclusive phenomena. He does so by implicitly endorsing theurgy and theurgic divination as *supra-rational* phenomena, which he envisaged as acting simultaneously as the culmination and transcendence of rationality rather than representing any lack or absence of rationality. This paradoxical notion represents the epistemological or cognitive correlate to: (1) the notion of the simultaneous transcendence and immanence of the gods, a key component of the theological and cosmological frameworks of theurgy, and (2) the psychological conception of the inclusivity of the different contexts and stages of theurgy, whereby each stage presupposes and integrates the previous stages. According to this view, rationality is not conceived as an end in itself but as a means to an end; it is connected with mystical, 'intuitive' cognitive states to which it can potentially lead when used in the appropriate conditions. Rationality and revelation are inherently interconnected and conceived as operating on an interlinked continuum. The anthropological and psychological implications of this integration of rationality and revelation are significant: at the lowest end of the continuum, revelation through oracles and other forms of inspired divination leads the client to use their rational faculties in order to 'decode' the oracle correctly and can potentially act as a protreptic towards philosophy. At higher stages of the continuum, the philosopher who uses their rationality in the appropriate conditions, with the requisite receptivity engendered through ethical cultivation and ritual praxis, has the potential to attain mystical states, conceived as supra-rational cognitive states, which are perceived as divinatory in nature: these mystical states are considered by late Platonist philosophers to be ultimately bestowed by the gods and connect the philosopher-theurgist to the gods through the attainment of divine vision. In relation to this, Iamblichus' account of divine possession and inspiration (and thus inspired divination) rests on the notion of simultaneous divine descent and human ascent. Divine descent is envisaged in terms of divine illumination (described as constantly available and present throughout all ontological levels) which is the idiom through which Iamblichus expresses divine immanence throughout the

cosmos. However, the ascent of the soul, which is implicitly codified as an ascent of consciousness to the gods, is described as primarily dependent on the will of the gods, but secondarily dependent on the individual's cultivation of their receptivity. Consequently, Iamblichus' model of divine possession is based on the notion that the god works *through* the soul of the possessed, replacing or enhancing the consciousness of the prophet(ess). The level of connection with the gods is designated in three cumulative stages: participation, communion and union, which parallel Iamblichus' three stages of prayer and three contexts for theurgic worship. All three stages involve receiving and manifesting the divine illumination of the gods. Yet the extent to which the prophet(ess) has developed their receptivity will affect the type of contact experienced: those who have trained their consciousness and contemplated intelligible reality while simultaneously cultivating their ethical and ritual capacities, may attain a deeper level of connection to the gods through their assimilation to the divine and are consequently conceived as more likely to remember their possession experience because of their conscious familiarity with the intelligible world of noetic reality. Thus, the degree of the soul's ascent correlates with the practitioner's memory of the possession experience. The Platonic theory of Recollection evidently lies at the centre of this theory, which provides a rationale for the differing memories of the divination ritual experienced by different individuals, with some maintaining their memory of the divinatory or oracular message, while others forget the experience of uttering the oracle, which is recorded by priestly officials or other ritual participants.

The integration of reason and revelation may already be present in the work of Porphyry, and certainly inextricable links between rationality and divine inspiration are implicit within much of his extant work: indeed the very title of *Philosophy from Oracles*, or *Philosophy Revealed from Oracles* as some translators would prefer, points in this direction.[1] Moreover, the content of this work, as well as the inextricable links between philosophy and religion in other Porphyrian works such as *De abstinentia* and the *Letter to Marcella*, Porphyry's view of Plotinus and his philosophical work as divinely inspired and guided, and his incorporation of the *Chaldean Oracles* (the paradigmatic example of theurgic divination within Neoplatonism) into Neoplatonism, all suggest that, for Porphyry, rationality, ritual and divine inspiration are intimately connected on a continuum. Porphyry's *Letter to Marcella* and *De abstinentia* attest to the philosopher's conviction that ritual cannot be divorced from the cultivation of ethical qualities and virtues, a conviction which underlies Iamblichus' articulation of theurgy but also the picture of theurgy presented much earlier within the *Chaldean Oracles*. Furthermore, Porphyry's *De abstinentia* presents a view of different contexts and forms of ritual for those at different stages of development and for the worship of specific levels of gods, a conception which closely parallels Iamblichus' framework of the

[1] Cf. Girgenti and Muscolino (2011); Muscolino (2013), 69–71; 387.

different contexts and cumulative stages of theurgic ritual. Thus, I have argued that Porphyry and Iamblichus share more similarities with regard to their views on oracles, divination and ritual practices than previously recognised. Furthermore, I have suggested that Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles* is a theurgic text. Firstly, the theurgic nature of the work is suggested by the centrality of 'oracular initiation' to the scope and nature of the work: the interconnections between allegory, mystery cults and oracles drawn in the prologue of the work demonstrate the centrality of allegorical interpretation to Porphyry's endeavour. The oracles contained within the work were viewed as symbols (σύμβολα) which, when read in an allegorical manner, could help the intelligent, pagan reader to understand the nature of the gods and the metaphysical structure underlying the cosmos. Allegory implies the necessity of a reader with 'multiple vision': one who can read the multiple meanings hidden under the surface of a text. Porphyry conceptualises allegorical interpretation as necessitating ideas of initiation and secrecy. Oracles, which are symbols (σύμβολα) that need to be decoded allegorically, are also implicitly compared and assimilated with mystery rituals, since the insight available within oracles and mystery rituals requires an 'initiation' and can only be understood by those who are initiated. Therefore, while oracles are authoritative utterances, they require a complex level of interaction between philosopher and oracle in order to be decoded correctly. To read and understand them in the appropriate manner gives the philosopher direct, experiential understanding of νοῦς (Intellect), one of the hypostases of the hypercosmic, intelligible realm, and to superior hypostases. Thus, for Porphyry, oracles and ritual are inextricably connected: as a symbol, an oracle is a significant element of ritual and potentially functions as a form of philosophical initiation. Secondly, the characterisation of this work as a theurgic text is supported by Porphyry's insistence that the oracles in his work have a soteriological function since the reception of oracles can aid the salvation of the soul: this was the central goal of theurgy, in which receiving (as well as uttering) oracles was the central means to attaining that goal. Thirdly, many oracles and fragments of the *Philosophy from Oracles* are concerned with ritual instruction and are based on the idea that the gods themselves bestow ritual instruction and the means of contacting the divine realm upon humans through divination: this is one of the central tenets of theurgy and further suggests the theurgic basis of this work. Fourthly, within this work Porphyry endorses a model of 'persuasive necessity' (πειθανάγκη) (rather than necessity) as the basis for invocations of the gods, suggesting close parallels with theurgy, which Iamblichus stringently maintains works through the divine love and providence of the gods who bestow their presence upon humans through divine illumination. The presence of many oracles attributed to Hekate (the goddess of the *Chaldean Oracles* and thus of the theurgists *par excellence*) in the work and the frequent allusions to statue animation and divination (τελεστική) add further evidence for the theurgic scope and nature of the *Philosophy from Oracles*.

The integration of ritual and rationality may well underlie Porphyry's broader approach towards religious practices. I have suggested an alternative interpretation of the exchange between Porphyry and Iamblichus, in the *Letter to Anebo* and *De Mysteriis*, regarding divination and other religious practices. This interaction is conventionally viewed as a hostile exchange, characterised by the scepticism of a 'rational' Porphyry in bitter opposition to Iamblichus, who is characterised as an 'evangelist' or, at best, as a proponent of ineffable religious acts seen as fundamentally conflicting with the 'intellectual' discursivity and semantics of the Greeks. This modern debate is by nature somewhat subjective; consequently, the thoughts offered in this study are provisional but offer a *possible* interpretation of the exchange between the philosophers as a mystagogic dialogue functioning within two very specific literary genres: Platonic dialogue and the genre of 'Problems and Solutions', the latter having marked similarities with the role of discourse in both oracles and philosophy. The exchange between Porphyry and Iamblichus operates as a comprehensive and positive articulation of theurgy and polytheistic religious phenomena, primarily for educational, protreptic and initiatory purposes (for an intended audience of philosophers and followers of traditional Graeco-Roman religions) and, secondarily, as a defence against Christian polemic. An initial comparison of Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* and Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* with certain philosophical treatises from the *Hermetica* suggests that both have a structure based on a system of graded stages of education and initiation and that this structure is based on the notion that the initiate must cultivate his or her receptivity in order to attain divine insight and assimilation. This interpretation of Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo*, Iamblichus *De Mysteriis* and the *Hermetica* raises intriguing possibilities for further research, while simultaneously locating these works much more firmly within their contemporary religious, cultural and intellectual milieux.

I have also attempted to reassess modern views on rationality and irrationality and their relationship to ritual, since assumptions about rationality and its relation to ritual have clearly influenced, and continue to influence, interpretations of Neoplatonism and its connections with religious practices. A sharp dichotomy is often applied in modern scholarship to differentiate firmly between the 'philosophical contemplation' (θεωρία) endorsed by Plotinus and Porphyry and the theurgy (θεουργία) of Iamblichus and his successors. This sharp, unbridgeable dichotomy between rationality and ritual has influenced conventional interpretations of the exchange between Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo* and Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*. Yet this rigid dichotomy is based on post-Enlightenment constructions of ritual, which rely on thought–action/mind–body dichotomies. These post-Enlightenment models construe a dualistic antithesis between religious ritual and philosophical rationality. Drawing on recent postcolonial and religious studies scholarship, which has challenged the widespread, post-Enlightenment dichotomy established between rationality and ritual, I have suggested that such a dichotomy can only be applied anachronistically

to theurgy and Neoplatonism. Focusing on Iamblichus' exposition of theurgy and Plotinus' conception of mystical union with the One, I have suggested that these phenomena share significant structural similarities – similarities which imply the dissolution of any rigid dichotomy between rationality and ritual. Both Iamblichus' notion of theurgy, especially 'intellectual and incorporeal' modes of worship, and Plotinus' conception of mystical union with the One share an identical ultimate goal (union with the One) which is conceived as transforming the consciousness and soul of the philosopher so as to allow union with superior entities: thus, both need to be conceptualised as 'ritual' praxis. Indeed, when the attitudes of Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus towards ritual are examined without recourse to post-Enlightenment models of ritual, a much more interlinked set of conceptions of ritual emerges, based on similar metaphysical, cosmological and ethical notions, such as the 'axiom of continuous hierarchy', the immutability of the divine and the philosopher's gradual progression towards interiorisation. I have suggested that a more nuanced conception of ritual needs to be developed so that the subtleties of the works of Neoplatonic philosophers and their attitudes towards religious phenomena may emerge more fully. The use of the term 'inner ritual' to describe interiorised visualisation or contemplative practices, especially those which utilise noetic symbols, may serve as a useful, initial step in delineating Neoplatonic ritual dynamics. The use of recent postcolonial and anthropological interrogations of conceptions of agency and the 'self' and their applicability to diverse ritual contexts may also provide a useful, theoretical basis for exploring Neoplatonist configurations of ritual praxis.[2] In a broader sense, this reassessment of the relation of rationality and ritual in Late Antique Platonism may possibly have wider implications for scholarly interpretations of ancient Graeco-Roman religious traditions, which have often been evaluated within the framework of a fundamental dichotomy between belief and action, or rationality and thought on the one hand and ritual praxis on the other.

While much further research remains to be undertaken in this important area, particularly on the roles of and interplay between divination and theurgy in the philosophy of Proclus, this study hopes to have demonstrated the significant role of divination in Neoplatonism and especially within theurgy.[3] As well as representing an important area of study in itself, divination offers a useful focus of analysis for study of divinisation, or 'becoming like a god', the central goal of Neoplatonism. In Late Antique Platonism (from Porphyry onwards), the philosopher becomes simultaneously the hierophant of cultic practice and the prophet(ess) (μάντις) of Apollo.

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[2] Cf. Addey (2013b), for an initial study of these themes in relation to Iamblichean divination and theurgy.

[3] Cf. Addey (2014), for an initial examination of Proclus' interpretation of the *daimonion* of Socrates and his wider attitudes towards *daimones* and divination.

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